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Resist War Propaganda

Immunize yourself against the incitement of hatred. Remember that truth is the first casualty of war. Here are two examples:

- When Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait before the first Gulf War, reports circulated about Iraqi soldiers stealing incubators from Kuwaiti hospitals and leaving the babies who had been in the incubators to die. That story was exposed as a lie after the war when the woman who made the statement was identified as the daughter of a Kuwaiti official.
- The press reported in 1999 that a genocide was occurring in Kosovo, with 100,000 to 200,000 bodies buried in mass graves. This news convinced many people that military intervention was again necessary. In September 2004, according to Lawrence Martin of the *Globe and Mail*, the Canadian forensic team searching for mass graves reported that there was no evidence of genocide and, in

The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark alleys to traverse.

— Helen Keller

fact, there were fewer than 1,000 bodies in the alleged mass graves.¹

Support the Troops and Oppose the War

In the first Gulf War, people who supported the war wore yellow ribbons and said those who protested were unpatriotic. Music from World War II romanticized the young men (and women) who went to war on our behalf. In a dreamy reminiscence of a different war, we pictured handsome Johnny marching home. And we forgot that in today's wars, 95 percent of the casualties are civilians — about half of them children. In other words, when we support war, we support killing those who are not combatants and who do not have a voice in their government. Ask yourself what if we did this to everyone? What if someone did it to us? We need to choose the other alternatives that do not include bombing from 35,000 feet.

A common strategy to confuse the issue is to label those who oppose war as traitors, cowards, draft dodgers, peaceniks, hippies, fuzzy-headed idealists, professional protesters, or communists rather than responding to their arguments. Another strategy is to deride the UN as weak and indecisive if it refuses to support the war plan. The UN was formed to prevent war. Period.

Watch for stories of brave dissenters taking a stand against armed conflict. There are many, but they appear for one day and then vanish into the void. In Israel, for example, a group of pilots refused to fly missions to the Gaza strip because they disagreed with killing people indiscriminately to enforce an Israeli occupation. There are over



Yesh Gvul (There is a limit) sponsored alternative torch lighting ceremony in Jerusalem on Israel's Independence Day, April 26, 2004.

Some alternative media you might want to check out:

Websites

- Media Lens: www.medialens.org
- Search for Common Dreams: www.commondreams.org
- Truthout: www.truthout.org
- Radio and television sources
- CBC: www.cbc.ca
- NPR: www.npr.org
- PRI: www.pri.org
- Democracy Now (with award-winning journalist Amy Goodman): www.democracynow.org
- PBS: www.pbs.org

Print sources

- *The Guardian*
- *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (English edition) comes out monthly in *The Guardian*
- *The Nation* magazine
- *The New Internationalist*
- *Yes! Magazine*
- *Zed Magazine*

Writers to watch for

- Naomi Klein, Bill Moyers, George Monbiot, Jonathan Schell, Greg Palast
- Ask what the Secretary-General of the UN is saying because he is more likely than political leaders to call for alternatives to bombing.
- Beware of false comparisons — we aren't facing Hitler and the Americans aren't back in Vietnam.
- Remind yourself of all the dictators who have been deposed by nonviolent means.

1,200 soldiers, reservists, and young draftees who have refused to serve in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and according to Yesh Gvul, an Israeli peace group, about 300 have been jailed.

Take the following steps when you want to check out the facts and not get caught up in the lies of the warmongers:

- Ask who will benefit from the war, or as the journalists say, "Follow the money."
- Ask "Is oil the reason for the war? Diamonds? Coltan, the mineral needed in cell phones?"
- Be suspicious that you are being sold a bill of goods when the radio plays "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."
- Be suspicious when you hear "You are either with us or against us"; "War is inevitable"; "Force is all they understand"; "No other means will work"; "This is the exceptional case"; "This war is for democracy, freedom, truth, justice, God." And remember, countries don't go to war to get little girls back into school.
- Question authority. Don't believe someone just because they are on TV or in print.
- Talk to the other side — organize a conference to bring together moderates to talk about the current issue.
- Look at the alternative media for alternative solutions such as unarmed observers, weapons inspectors, third-party negotiations, or economic incentives.

10 Pray, Meditate, Reconcile, and Forgive

Many of us have felt a call to action that has stirred us to join the great movements for peace, social justice, and the environment. Action, for some of us, is an expression of our religious faith. For others it is an expression of love and compassion for those who are suffering, or it expresses a deep connection to nature. Some describe themselves as spiritual but not religious — they have a sense of a transcendent purpose, but do not subscribe to an organized religion. Others do not relate to something outside themselves but recognize an internal series of principles that guide their actions.

In my case, it was the nuclear issue that made me consider the ultimate existential questions of "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" In 1984, after hearing Dr. Helen Caldicott lecture, I lay awake for three nights wrestling with my deep reluctance to take a stand against nuclear weapons. First I argued with her in my mind.

"I am not sure that your facts are right."
"So check them out. They are from the Pentagon and the US government."

"I am not that kind of person."

"What kind of person?"

"That placard-carrying, strident, marching kind of person. I don't believe they can save the world."

"No, I agree, it's going to take mothers, doctors, teachers, writers, public speakers"

"Yeah." As a woman doctor and a former teacher/columnist/public speaker, I was running out of excuses.

"I don't have time to take on anything more."

Teach this triple truth to all:
A generous heart, kind speech, and
a life of service and compassion are
the things which renew humanity.
— Buddha

"Who does?"
"I need to work and save money for my kids."

"And if there is no planet?"
The questions shifted over the next nights to the core questions of my existence. Why is there life instead of nothing? Why am I alive now, at this time in history? Am I personally meant to do something? Is there a God acting through us, assuming that we will take action to save the Earth?

Finally, without answers, I acquiesced. I began to work against nuclear weapons, knowing that now I would not back off, that I would put myself on the line.

Once, in Kazakhstan, I attended a huge antinuclear-testing protest organized by the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement. Americans who lived downwind from tests in the US state of Nevada joined with tribespeople from the Soviet test range in their rejection of further tests in either country. One morning a group of doctors from outside Kazakhstan spontaneously gathered in the hotel bar at 7:30 a.m. to meditate and reflect together. The astonished bar staff carefully stopped vacuuming and closed the door behind us. One of the doctors said "I think there is a reason for us to be here — we who have the advantages of money and education, who choose to be here now instead of on a ski weekend." As a result of the protest, Mikhail Gorbachev stopped Soviet nuclear testing.

The power that is beyond our understanding is called by many names in different faiths. I have gradually come to rely on that unknowable

presence both in my medical practice and in my work against violence and war. I think of it as spiritual, but sometimes I call it love. In meditation or prayer one can sometimes almost touch a central meaning that connects all people and all beings. I find the practice of seeking that which is of God in each person to be a powerful way to stop judging and condemning those I disagree with.

In the past 20 years I have met thousands of people who have committed themselves to making a better world. They run the whole gamut

from the deeply religious to atheists. They have chosen to live their lives with the goal of bringing peace to their communities and the world. I have been deeply affected hearing their reasons and listening to what sustains them.

Those who have been able to forgive and reconcile with their former enemies have drawn on a deep wellspring to find the strength to let go of the need for revenge and choose a different future. It is in community with others who are willing to try to take that same path that we are most likely to build a new way to live together.

TEN SOLUTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Christians for Justice and Peace: www.sojourners.com
- Downwinders (Movement against nuclear testing) www.downwinders.org
- Fellowship of Reconciliation: www.ifor.org
- *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* by Thich Nhat Hanh, Bantam, 1991
- Ten Ways to Stop War with Your Spirit: www.earthfuture.com/stopthewar/spirit.asp
- Tikkun Community (An interfaith group based on Judaism): www.tikkun.org/community
- Women Praying for Peace: www.women-praying-for-peace.org



MARK ANTONIO

Protest at the Soviet nuclear test range in Kazakhstan, 1990 stopped Soviet nuclear bomb tests.