

West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition



**Presents
Peace Essay Contest Winners**

**August 27, 2013
The 85th Anniversary of the Kellogg-Briand Pact**

West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition

Peace Essay Contest

Award Presentations

August 27, 2013

The 85th Anniversary of the Kellogg-Briand Pact

Peace Essay Judges

Leila Bannon, Villa Park, IL

Gene Birmingham, Bensenville, IL

Amira Boctor, Oak Brook, IL

Diane Boynton, Wheaton, IL

Laurie Coughlan, Western Springs, IL

Jean Hoegler, Villa Park, IL

Dave Karcher, Lombard, IL

Nobuko Kudo, Esq., Lombard, IL

Carol Urban, Glen Ellyn, IL

Peace Essay Coordinator

Frank Goetz, Wheaton, IL

Peace Essay Winners

First Place Award

Isobel Michaud, Wheaton, IL – Age 16

Second Place Award

Katherine Pepe, Santa Barbara, CA

Third Place Awards

Matt Levin, Hatfield, MA

Mark Miller, Greenbelt, MD

Phillip A. Tolentino, Silver Spring, MD – Age 16

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About the Peace Essay Contest

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Presented at Reza's Restaurant, Oak Brook, IL

First Place Award

Isobel Michaud, Wheaton, IL – Age 16

Peace Versus War: Is It the World's Struggle or America's?

Faced with the challenge of bringing an isolationist American people into the Great War, Woodrow Wilson, in addressing Congress, declared, “We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts--our democracy...for a universal dominion of right...as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself free at last.” Wilson envisioned a post-war world where a new International order would be established, a world “safe for democracy.” With these ambitions in mind, Wilson led America on a crusade for worldwide democracy. With Allied victory in the “war to end all wars” in 1918, Americans wanted to rid themselves of foreign entanglement. And with the Great War's conclusion, our country withdrew from global engagement to enjoy the decade of prosperity rightfully characterized as the “Roaring Twenties.” Eager to avoid war, America retreated back to a foreign policy of isolationism, but also one that pursued international harmony.

During the 1920's, the United States proactively sought peace agreements, including joining the World Health Organization, disarmament agreements at the Washington Naval Conference (1921), and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. This pact set hopeful precedent with the agreement to outlaw war. The pact, although signed by over sixty nations, ultimately failed to prevent war, as it was filled with a critical loophole that allowed wars to be fought in “self-defense.” This loophole,

combined with Germanic post-WWI resentments and the rise of Japanese, German, and Italian totalitarianism, contributed to the outbreak of WWII in 1939. Although this pact is still officially part of U.S. policy, it did not restrain the United States from entering into wars of the last eighty years, as evidence by the Korean and Vietnam Wars, along with our forces being deployed in the Middle East to this day. As for the other sixty-plus nations to sign the pact, they have not avoided the grasp of war either. But is it a problem with the pact or with humanity that causes conflict?

Considering our human history of bloodshed and war, is a world without war too idealistic to achieve? No, but a world without any strife or conflict is. If each one of our lives contains a series of struggles, how can we expect an entire world of people to coexist peacefully? We cannot, and so the challenge remains; how can we resolve our problems without war as the answer? How can we remain true to the Kellogg-Briand Pact while our predecessors could not?

First, we must understand what causes war. Why go to war at all. Surely it is not for the hellfire, the blood and gore, and the suffering and loss that war ultimately is. So why do we fight? We put our lives on the line for one thing, some type of gain. Whether it is for gain in the form of money, land, resources or power, or for the nobler causes of protecting one's family, nation and beliefs, we hope that war will have benefits. With war, we fight for our wants over someone else's wants. So how, in a world where everyone always wants *more*, can we avoid conflict? The key is to eliminate the idea of entitlement. We all have wants, but getting everything you want is as disillusioned as a world without strife. We must shed the idea of our wants coming before the basic needs of other nations. How can the United States be a role model for the rest of the world if we neglect to reach out to

other nations and address the needs of their people? The first step to avoiding war is for the United States, as a nation blessed with freedom, democracy, and a wealth of resources, to take the lead and help out other nations. In doing this, we will not only fulfill our moral obligation, mend wrecked relationships and be a role model to the rest of the world, but also establish a new measure for handling world affairs.

In 1934, FDR created the Reciprocal Trade Act, which reduced the Hawley Smoot Tariff, the highest peacetime tariff ever, with the expectations that others would follow suit and therefore increase world trade. In this way the United States gave a little to gain more, and this agreement helped the world recover from the depression. Generosity worked for the economy, so why can't it work for diplomacy? Once we reach out to others in need and repair relations, the final step to peaceably solving problems is to *compromise* through "reciprocal" diplomatic agreements. War is the opiate for our problems, but, like any narcotic, often has addictive and fatal consequences. Does America want to pursue suicidal "solutions" to world conflict or viable ones?

Second Place Award

Katherine Pepe, Santa Barbara, CA

How Can We Obey the Law Against War?

When recalling grade school history class it saddens me to realize one of the most promising events in history was never taught to me. Fifteen nations signed a treaty in Paris on August 27, 1928 giving their support to the Kellogg-Briand Pact to outlaw war. Aristide Briand, the French foreign minister, originally proposed a bilateral treaty between France and the United States to outlaw war. Frank Kellogg, the United States Secretary of State at the time, countered Briand's request proposing a multilateral treaty outlawing war, "renouncing it as an instrument of national policy." Both men were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and rightly so with their initiatives with the Pact of Paris, as the treaty is also known.

In our most recent wars, I do not recall former President Bush mentioning the Pact of Paris when speaking to the American people about going to war with Afghanistan or Iraq. Instead, he stated regarding Iraq that "more than 35 countries are giving crucial support... Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honor in serving in our common defense. To all the men and women of the United States armed forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you." With 4,486 U.S. soldier deaths from 2003-2012, the burden placed on these brave men and women was horrendous. The total fatalities for Iraqi soldiers and insurgents, based on United Nations estimate, for just the year 2006 was 34,452 deaths.

In the years following the initial signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 47 nations added their signatures for a total of 62 nations. This has me wondering why no nation even mentioned the issue of war being illegal. At this point in time all the nations of the world need to think long and deeply about removing war as an option in the conflict resolution equation. I suggest we start with one, simple step. Let's begin with a global movement to make 2020 the first, chosen year in history without war. Well, that step has already been taken with the global, web community of 2020 A Year Without War.

Let's remind the world that war is illegal. Let's simply join and support the development of this global organization already launched. Let's make A Year Without War happen. Their first initiative at A Year Without War is to petition the United Nations to formally recognize August 27th as The Pact of Paris Day, the day the world outlawed war. Ending war is not a simple process and will take many baby steps as it took humanity in abolishing slavery. At one time slavery was practiced in every major civilization as a common practice. Now it is globally illegal and in every case a criminal act. So should it be with regard to war. War should not be a final fall back option.

With technological advancements we now have an opportunity never before available. We can join together the 1.2 million peace organizations on Earth, as well as civilians around the world, as a focused lobby to create 2020 as a year without war. We can agree that war is an archaic solution to ending our inevitable conflicts. My generation, the millennials, is known to be civic-minded and we realize that there are bigger, global issues for our planet that requires unity as opposed to the constant opposition we've seen throughout history.

Steven Pinker explains in his book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, that we are living in one of the most peaceable eras in human history. It is my hope that in coming together as a global community at the A Year Without War website we can realize the value of more suitable forms of conflict resolution and make 2020 truly humanity's first year designed to be without war. Let's take our huge Peace Dividend from ending war and focus our attention on environmental concerns, educational advancements and the vast technology at our fingertips, all much more enticing than the blood and mayhem of war.

Third Place Award

Matt Levin, Hatfield, MA

How Can We Obey the Law Against War?

‘On August 27, 1928, many countries signed a treaty called the Kellogg-Briand Pact which outlawed war. After ratification by the U.S. Senate in 1929, this Pact became law in the United States and sixty- five other countries.’ Frank Goetz

So, for eighty years in the United States, it’s been illegal to wage war. One wonders how they get away with it—(“Too Big to Fail?” We’ve seen the results of that.)

The US Department of State Office of the Historian admits that “It soon became clear that there was no way to enforce the pact or sanction those who broke it; it also never fully defined what constituted “self-defense,” so there were many ways around its terms. In the end, the Kellogg-Briand Pact did little to prevent World War II or any of the conflicts that followed.”

Wikipedia acknowledges that ‘the signatories, having renounced the use of war began to wage wars without declaring them, as evidenced by numerous “interventions,” “retaliations” and outright invasions by nations world-wide.’

War is outlawed as a national policy: it is against the American Law. Only recently has any American president been honest, indifferent or oblivious enough to declare war on another nation.

If the political leaders of the world have come to a point where they are willing to admit to using warfare as ‘as an instrument of national policy’ it’s up to us to call them to account and urge upon them a new course of action.

To me this means a cause and course of common sense: acknowledge, with admitted great reluctance, that given the state of the nation at home, the United States can no longer act as the world’s policeman. Far from withdrawing into isolation, the United States will prepare itself to become the world’s supplier of better health, education, and welfare.

Announce proudly the creation of the United States Food Corps., whose purpose it is to make delivery and distribution of food and medicines to the peoples of nations which request delivery. Announce the creation of the U.S. Rescue Squad, whose purpose in times of international natural emergencies is to effect rescue and field-treatment for those under-going emergencies, when called upon by the peoples of a nation in need. Fund and staff these organizations with present funding for and members of the combined armed forces.

Announce the creation of the New U.S. Labor Force, staffed and commanded by returning armed forces personnel, to set to work repairing our home-land infrastructure.

Cease immediately all production of new weaponry; retool and manufacture machinery and tools to supply the Food Corps., the Rescue Squadrons, and the New U.S. Labor Force. Turn all research into biological weaponry into research into biological cures.

Create a draft for all persons for two years as part of the Labor Force, the year following college graduation, or as an alternative to college.

Encourage legislators to join a national movement to have the Kellogg-Briand Pack part of every Middle School and High School History/Social Studies curriculum. Publicize this, and the Pact, via newspaper and other social media, emphasizing each August 27 as a day of special recognition. Encourage legislators to write a brief commemoration into the minutes of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate on the floor of each house on that date.

That's a way our nation can obey the Kellogg-Briand Pact; a way we can begin to obey the law against war.

Third Place Award

Mark Miller, Greenbelt, MD

How Can We Obey the Law Against War?

The Kellogg-Briand Pact outlaws war. Signed in 1928 following the Great War's senseless carnage, the Pact renounces war as an instrument of national policy and solemnly declares that peaceful means are the only lawful way to resolve international disputes. As a duly ratified and legally binding international treaty, the Pact is the supreme law of the land under Article VI of the United States Constitution.¹

But laws are not always obeyed. And governments are sometimes the scofflaws. The U.S. has repeatedly shirked its duty under the Pact to use only peaceful means. Illegal U.S. military campaigns have wrought instability, destruction, death, and suffering overseas and have burdened future American generations with war debt. Instead of pursuing disarmament, the U.S. keeps investing in weapons.

The U.S. State Department admits that the Pact remains a binding treaty but in practice simply ignores it. What can Americans do, to encourage our government to obey this rule of law?

U.S. officials have not always ignored the Pact; early on, they invoked it to denounce aggressive acts as unlawful: for example, Japan's 1931 invasion of

¹ Kellogg-Briand Pact, General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy, *signed at Paris 27 August 1928*, 46 Stat. 2343, T.S. No. 796.

Manchuria and Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia.² After World War II, the Pact served as the legal basis for prosecuting Axis leaders for "crimes against peace." The conviction of Nazis at Nürnberg for crimes against peace demonstrated that the Pact is no mere paper document. Unfortunately, the Nürnberg tribunals did more to show that military victors can put losers on trial, than to advance compliance with the principle that war is illegal.

The 1945 United Nations Charter reinforced the Pact by articulating the duty "to refrain . . . from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."³ Hopes that the Charter's enforcement mechanisms would prevent war were dashed by postwar geopolitical realities: the arms race and Cold War hostilities. Even after U.S.-Soviet tensions eased, the Charter proved ineffective to halt illegal use of force.

The troubling persistence of illegal wars has led some to envision a powerful world army dedicated to enforcing peace. The idea that the law needs "teeth" (i.e., sanctions, punishment, threats of force) is not quite the same as the notion that might makes right, but to focus on enforcement misleadingly suggests that obedience to the law forbidding war ultimately depends on superior force. Military

² The Pact specified no mechanism to respond to breaches; some people felt the Pact's signatories (including the U.S.) were obligated not to use military force, even to oppose aggression in other lands. Moreover, public opinion opposed foreign entanglements. FDR insisted that, despite Italy's unlawful violation of the Pact, the U.S. could not become involved in the Italy-Ethiopia conflict because the dispute was under consideration by the League of Nations.

³ Charter of the United Nations, June 26, 1945, 59 Stat. 1031 (*entered into force Oct. 24, 1945*), Art. 2.

enforcement of the Pact will not halt unlawful warmaking. Politicians bent on war would surely invoke “war to end war” as an expedient to justify using force.

Because violence is antithetical to peace, solutions must lie in nonviolence. Can we identify—and remove—the causes of noncompliance with the law against war?

We must not let the clamor for military strength drown out the law renouncing war. As President Eisenhower warned, the growing military-industrial complex dominates legislative and executive branches. Congress passes “defense” budgets antithetical to the law. The judiciary offers no relief; U.S. courts simply defer to “the political branches” when presented with legal questions concerning war.⁴

We need sustained voices to raise awareness of the law against war. If everyone learned from childhood that war is illegal, the political dialogue would not treat war as an acceptable instrument of national policy. Officials would not discuss unilateral U.S. military action as an “option.” Politicians espousing American “exceptionalism”—a slogan that pretends the U.S. is above the law— would face ridicule.

Do commercial media ignore the illegality of war? Then let’s publicize war’s unlawfulness everywhere we can. Have university graduates never heard of the

⁴ International criminal prosecutions against deposed leaders are haphazard, making typical trials “political theatre” rather than judicial proceedings under law. Leaders of powerful nations seem unconcerned by the remote risk that someday they might be held accountable before a tribunal for planning and waging illegal wars.

Pact? Then let's conduct seminars and teach-ins about the Pact on college campuses and in high schools across the country.

We must educate Americans to understand that military actions breach the solemn duty to settle disputes peacefully, are illegal, and leave everyone less secure. Heightened public awareness can move the U.S. toward eventual compliance with the Pact.

Third Place Award

Phillip A. Tolentino, Silver Spring, MD – Age 16

Obeying the Law

War has been present in almost every era known to man; it has been regarded to as inevitable and as a necessity to assert dominance. In regards to America, our history books are tainted with the blood of war, it being an ever present factor even in present times. And though the presence of war should of course lessen due to it being a trait of a society of ignorance, and America being an advanced nation, war has continued to advance into the world of politics and our economy. Today, the moral standard has been lowered due to the selfish intentions of others to gain power and wealth, and because of that we as a society have begun to devolve. War destroys the environment, the lives of those who participate in it, and innocent lives. So as to counter these negative effects the simple solution is of course to eradicate the problem, to declare a war on war.

Fortunately a solution has already been created; the *Kellogg-Briand Pact* is an agreement that seeks to resolve issues through means that do not include the repercussions of war. The problem with this solution is implementation. Because war has become so profitable economically and politically anyone who dares oppose war is disregarded and becomes unimportant in the eyes of the public. War is obviously seen as a moral disgrace due to the lives lost and money spent; however, it can be twisted into a picture so that it creates jobs and is necessary otherwise it would show weakness. To solve this issue the only viable solution is R.E.D. (Revolutionize, Educate, Diplomacy).

The first action of Revolutionization is enacted to produce short term results and is not an actual revolution like a coup but a moral revolution. This revolution would include protests and promoting general awareness. This revolution would be a peaceful one similar to the Civil Rights movement. Any violence and the movement would be seen as ludicrous and disorganized. If too passive such as a petition the movement would be disregarded as halfhearted. These protests would be of large proportion against ruining lives through the means of war. The protests would furthermore bring media attention and force politicians to take action. To support our claims we would use the legitimacy of the previously stated pact to leave politicians flabbergasted. Demands would include severe cuts from the government funding of war related actions such as production and manufacture of weapons, withdrawal of soldiers from countries that are unnecessarily stationed there, and a redeclaration of the U.S. government's stance in opposition of war.

The second part is education. Of course education is produced through the first step; however, this education would be through the educational system. The reform would gain support due to its positive connotations and it would encompass the immorality of war because of the negative effects on life it has and the unnecessary spending included in funding it which could be used to fund causes such as the educational system, disaster relief programs, scientific study, third world countries and recreation within the U.S., etc. This education would ensure the short term changes enacted through the moral revolution stay and that the citizens of tomorrow understood the value of human life.

The last step is diplomacy. This would be in correlation to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The aforementioned pact demands that all conflicts be solved in ways other

than war; therefore, the only solution is diplomacy. Diplomacy in replacement of war is more cost effective, is less bloody, and has a favorable view in the media. Diplomacy would lead to a more peaceful nation and ultimately would stop our budget from continuing to skyrocket as it does today.

War is the stain on American society no one likes; however, no one at the same time wished to address its existence. It is a social sin that must end immediately and we must foster the minds of tomorrow so that they in turn will see the mistakes previous generation have made. Through a moral revolution, education of our youth, and diplomacy among nations, we can reform the American society for the better, and will hopefully set off a chain of moral revolutions against other injustices in the world that ultimately could lead to a golden era. We need to take a step back and examine our views on this moral monstrosity that's allowed to occur. It seems sad that we can be fined for a broken headlight but the country that, for a worthless cause, allows lives to be thrown away faces no repercussions. I sincerely hope that it does not take a third World War to make America see why war was made illegal. We need to begin following this law for regulatory and more importantly moral purposes.

About the Peace Essay Contest

This project was inspired by David Swanson's book, "When the World Outlawed War" and by Kathy Kelly, a three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, who gave the book to Frank Goetz.

The West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition (WSFPC) regards the multinational agreement of the Kellogg-Briand Pact to outlaw war 85 years ago a major advancement of civilization. The WSPFC thinks it should not be the world's best kept secret.

The WSPFC established the Peace Essay Contest to inform the public, particularly students, about this historic event and promised a \$1,000.00 award to the author of the best essay. A total of 129 essays were submitted. Nine judges, extraordinary people who are deeply committed to peace in their own ways, reviewed all of the essays and provided weighted votes for their top 5 candidates. Their vote tallies resulted in the 5 award-winning essays presented in this book.

The WSPFC appreciates all who participated in this Peace Essay Contest, especially the 129 authors who submitted the essays and the nine judges (the "Supremes") who evaluated them. We would also like to acknowledge all who promoted the Peace Essay Contest, especially Amira Boctor, Nobuko Kudo, Gene Birmingham, Dave Karcher, David Swanson who posted the essays on www.warisacrime.org and national Peace Organizations including Pax-Christi, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Veterans for Peace who distributed the Peace Essay Rules to their members. We appreciate the support of all who made the Winners Announcement such a memorable event, including Kay Goetz, Terry Rynne, and Marquette University Center for Peacebuilding. We congratulate the winners! And we invite your comments and suggestions regarding this project. Please send your questions and comments to Frank Goetz at frankgoetz@comcast.net.

Visit our website at www.faitpeace.org to view our activities, read all 129 essays and, in the near future, learn the rules for the 2014 Peace Essay Contest.