West Suburban
Faith-Based Peace Coalition
(WSFPC)

Presents

Peace Essay Contest Winners

August 27, 2019
The 91st Anniversary
of the Kellogg-Briand Pact
West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition

Our Mission Statement:
- End America’s perpetual wars
- Promote peace and justice in public policy
- Educate our membership on legislative issues
- Communicate with our political leaders
- Encourage the public to become involved

Who are we?
We are an initiative of faith-based peacemakers from across Chicago’s western suburbs. WSFPC includes clergy, congregations, church staff, lay persons, faith-based peace organizations, peace and justice committees, religious communities and more, spanning from Oak Park to Elgin and Joliet. WSFPC is committed to sustaining work of peace through activities such as prayer vigils, peace education, peace essay competition, lobbying/legislative initiatives and interfaith dialogue.

Some of our member organizations are: Fellowship of Reconciliation, PAX Christi IL, the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, the Lombard Mennonite Church, and the York Center Church of the Brethren.

Where and when do we meet?
The Legislation Workgroup meets the first Wednesday of every month from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Downers Grove, 1032 W. Maple, room # 202, Downers Grove, IL.

The Servant Leadership Team meets the second Thursday of every month from 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. at the Two Thirteen Building, 213 S. Wheaton Ave., Wheaton, IL.

Educational Forums are scheduled the third Tuesday of every month from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Lombard Mennonite Church, 528 E. Madison, Lombard, IL.

How can I become a member?
Send your name, email address and telephone number, along with a check for any amount ($30 for individuals, $100 for organizations suggested) to: WSFPC, 213 S. Wheaton Ave., Wheaton, IL 60187. Our website is: www.faithpeace.org.

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West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition

Peace Essay Contest Awards Presentations

Aug. 27, 2019
The 91st Anniversary of the Kellogg-Briand Pact

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Keynote Address

“10 Ways We Pretend War Is Not a Crime and How to Change Them”

David Swanson
Author, Anti-war Activist, Journalist, Radio Host
5-time Nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize

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Peace Essay Judges
Leila Bannon, Villa Park, IL
Amira Boctor, Oak Brook, IL
Karen Jackson, Woodridge, IL
Jean Rosen, Wheaton, IL
Carol Urban, Glen Ellyn, IL

Peace Essay Contest Coordinator
Frank Goetz, Wheaton, IL

Presented at Abbington Distinctive Banquets, Glen Ellyn, IL
Peace Essay Winners

First Place Award
Patrick Flynn, Chicago, IL

Second Place Award
Franklin O. Sorenson, Naperville, IL

Third Place Award
Donna A. Calabrese, Erie, CO

~

Honorable Mention
Rev. Marvis L. Hardy, Chicago, IL
Rev. Selena A. Naumoff, Littleton, CO
Kenneth Okpomo, Lagos, Nigeria
“Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state.” - Noam Chomsky

As the spring of 1917 slowly collapsed into summer, President Woodrow Wilson was facing a conundrum of his own making. The previous year’s election had seen Wilson’s Democratic party coalesce around a distinctly anti-war message. Campaign slogans extolled that Wilson was the man who “kept us out of the war.” Wilson’s electoral victory seemed to vindicate this strategy. Just months into his term, however, the American ruling class determined that U.S. involvement in Europe’s war was imperative. How then was Wilson, an avowedly anti-war president, to persuade a deeply skeptical nation of the merits of intervention?

The U.S. of the early twentieth century, for all of its flaws, was not a totalitarian state. Wilson could not force an unpopular war down the throats of the population, nor could he beat every single dissident into submission. On the contrary, Wilson knew that America’s war abroad would have to be preceded by a domestic one: the war for the American public mind. This conflict would be one, not of armies and navies, but of popular media and advertising. The primary weapon in whipping up public support would not be an aggressive police force or a loaded rifle, but an efficient propaganda machine.

With this in mind, Wilson signed Executive Order 3154, establishing the Committee on Public Information. George Creel, the head of the CPI, was unambiguous about his aims: CPI was to “weld the people of the United States into one white-hot mass instinct” and foster a “war-will.” Under Creel, CPI spent over two years producing and disseminating pro-war media—much of it misleading or false. In addition, CPI worked to demonize Germans, painting them as animalistic and bent on the destruction of America. The innocuous name of the committee thus obscured its true function of altering public opinion by any means necessary. The “Public Information” in the committee’s title was, in fact, a euphemism for state-sponsored propaganda.

CPI pursued its goals with chilling efficacy. Notes one historian, “Many Americans took CPI’s dark warnings to heart. Thousands of self-appointed guardians of patriotism began to harass pacifists, socialists, and German immigrants.” In two years, CPI had played a major role in transforming a war-weary population into a critical mass of frenzied nationalists.

Though the CPI was disbanded, propaganda has remained a constant in U.S. politics. In 1953, for instance, the democratically elected leader of Guatemala promised to nationalize the lands controlled by the United Fruit Company (UFC). Seeing a threat to its banana republic, UFC acquired the services of Edward Bernays, the father of the public relations industry. An unabashed advocate of propaganda, Bernays oversaw a campaign of outright lies, portraying Guatemala’s socially democratic leaders as raving communists, dedicated to Soviet domination.
Bernays’ propaganda paved the way for the CIA to launch a violent coup, installing a Western friendly government.

It is not difficult to think of other instances in which powerful entities have employed propaganda to deceive the public into supporting military intervention. Following the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution, the CIA deployed its propaganda apparatus in support of Contra insurgents. In 1983, the Reagan administration followed the Guatemala script to justify the invasion of Grenada. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was similarly facilitated by elaborate campaigns of public and private propaganda, manufactured to stoke fear and nationalism.

Regardless of how pervasive it is in our cultures and histories, war is not an essential component of human existence. Indeed, in 1928, the governments of France and the U.S. came together to sign the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, outlawing war as a form of conflict resolution. In total, 63 nations joined the pact. Yet, as mentioned, propaganda has time and time again been weaponized to lead nations to war, in defiance of the pact’s prohibition. Honoring the legacy of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, then, means more than simply teaching people about its existence or commemorating its signing. It must also mean deliberately examining and working to contest the social forces that have historically been marshalled to justify wars.

Gore Vidal once wrote, “We are the United States of Amnesia. We learn nothing because we remember nothing.” Educational institutions are uniquely situated to contest this national amnesia, to teach students that the history of war is inextricably linked to the history of propaganda. By explicitly teaching students about the ways in which propaganda has functioned to sell wars to reluctant populations, we can equip students with the capacity to identify and challenge future forms of militaristic propaganda. This pedagogical approach understands history as an exercise that is intimately linked to the present task of promoting sustainable peace. Teaching the history of propaganda, in other words, is an act of collective remembering, firmly rooted in our responsibility to the future.

Response:

Thank you for sharing your essay, which raises important questions about the role that propaganda plays in leveraging state-sanctioned violence. Your discussion brings into sharp relief the need both for scrupulous analysis of the past and for steady vigilance in the present, as the line between public discourse and propaganda is tenuous at best. As suggested by your historical allusions, what is proffered as moral justification is too often a thinly veiled tactic aimed at manipulating public sentiment and buttressing realpolitik ideology.

In light of your essay and our subsequent communications, it has become clear to me that, in my research and teaching on the ethics of war and peace, I have not been sufficiently attentive to the way that propaganda threatens to undermine any meaningful engagement with the just war tradition. Save for a brief exploration of Joseph Goebbels and his status as a combatant, I have tended to focus on the sort of ideal conditions under which war might qualify as morally necessary. You have persuaded me that the rhetoric of war requires far more scrutiny. Moving forward, I intend to integrate a devoted segment of my courses to this purpose.
Thank you again for sharing your insights and for helping me to make long overdue changes to my approach.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Wilson, Ph.D.
Ethics Program
Villanova University
Second Place Award
Franklin O. Sorenson, Naperville, IL

“A proposal to Abby Omerza
and R. Bruce Duffield”

The Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact of 1928 recognized that war is the scourge of the ages. Though the pact was endorsement by many nations, war has unfortunately continued.

War has resulted in the death and maiming of untold millions, and leaves poverty and disease in its wake. Even when active conflict ends, the effects of war may linger for generations and leave combatants, families, and nations in rubble. This intentional destruction of life and property goes against the better human instincts of love, friendship, cooperation, and the building of societies.

War is usually caused by greed for riches or for domination over other societies. Avaricious or power-hungry political leaders often poison public opinion, branding their intended targets as “others,” as inferior people worthy of subjugation or extermination, to get popular support for their aggressive actions.

People of conscience can prevent a propaganda program from taking root in their society if they firmly believe that those branded as “outsiders” have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs similar to their own. The character Shylock, in Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice, a member of a despised economic and cultural class, reminds us of our common humanness:

“If you prick us, do we not bleed?...
“If you poison us, do we not die?”

US citizens believe, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal” in their worthiness to be given civil protections and friendship.

No child is born hating another because of differences. Children learn prejudice and discrimination—or inclusion and acceptance—from the world around them. As poignantly stated by Lt. Cable in Rodgers & Hammerstein’s musical, South Pacific,

“You’ve got to be taught before it’s too late,
“Before you are six or seven or eight,
“To hate all the people your relatives hate.
“You’ve got to be carefully taught.”

The recognition that all people have similar feelings, needs, and aspirations is empathy. Jesus of Nazareth emphasized the need to consider others’ feelings and needs when he taught, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
I believe that a pervasive failure in our society, perhaps reaching to the level of a subtle, unrecognized crime against humanity, is for parents, teachers, and nurturers to fail to teach empathy.

We cannot depend on educators, athletes or political leaders to teach empathy effectively. Empathy must be taught in the home, must begin at infancy, and must continue as children grow. Consistent examples of empathy from teachers and other adults through the child’s youth are essential to reinforce inclusive attitudes, habits and practices.

Empathy can be modeled through friendly interactions with people we meet, inclusion of people from other cultures in social and family activities, and demonstrating to those we teach that we do not attach negative implications or judgements to people who are different. We must carefully avoid criticizing other people in their absence or in front of children. When we see discriminatory behavior, we should gently remind those in our care that it is inappropriate to consider others as inferior, and then model proper behavior. Those we nurture can learn empathy only if these habits are unfailingly followed.

Our society must denounce the teaching or modeling of hatred and prejudice in the home, and encourage all adults to consistently show and actively teach all with whom they associate to practice empathy. Only when our society considers those who look, speak, or worship differently that we are all children of God and worthy of respect and inclusion can we expect to decrease our society’s appetite for war.

To bring the teaching of empathy to the forefront of attention, I propose general adoption of what I call the “Empathy Pledge”:

1. I pledge to examine my inner feelings to discover any discriminatory attitudes toward other groups of people, and to strive to develop empathy, compassion, and acceptance of these people. 
2. I pledge to teach those within my sphere of influence, tirelessly and consistently, by example and by word, to consider other people as worthy of friendship and inclusion.
3. I pledge to encourage others to practice and teach empathy.

If parents, teachers, and leaders actively teach and show empathy, our societies will produce a new generation that will favor mutual understanding and negotiation, rather than animosity and conflict. With determination and concentrated effort and a populace that rejects discrimination, we will be able to break the cycle of greed, hatred, and lust for domination.

It must become socially unacceptable to practice or to teach children discrimination. Building an accepting, including society must begin with children who are taught empathy by parents and nurturers. When empathic societies reject war, the lofty goals of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact may finally be achieved.

Responses:

Response from Abby Omerza, President of the Relief Society of the Naperville Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. (The Relief Society is the general women’s
organization, with several hundred members. The Naperville Stake comprises 10 congregations stretching from Woodridge to Sugar Grove, IL.)

“Franklin’s essay makes a vital point that empathy begins in the home. Parents, grandparents and other adults in a child’s life have an opportunity to provide examples of empathy and friendship. These examples can help children grow into adults who value every individual regardless of physical or cultural differences. It is the small, day-to-day actions that have the potential to make a dramatic change in the world within the span of a single generation. As a leader of our church’s women’s organization, I appreciate the opportunity to share this message. The women in our organization are mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers. All are teachers, either formally or informally, of the children in their congregations and in their neighborhoods. This invitation to model empathy within our homes, our churches, and our communities can be extended to each woman. As they take the messages into their hearts and homes they will find opportunities to increase their efforts to model compassion, inclusion, and friendship to all. As they do so, the younger generation will observe and learn and will grow up knowing only an ingrained habit of acceptance of all people.”

Response from R. Bruce Duffield, Interfaith Liaison for the Public Affairs Committee of the Naperville Illinois Stake and Senior Counsel at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP. These statements reflect the views of Mr. Duffield, not necessarily those of Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner.

“Thank you for inviting me to comment on the impact of your essay on “how we can obey the law against war.” Your ideas can have a profoundly positive impact moving the world toward peace, because you recognize that the key lies within the rising generation, and because you provide concrete steps for guiding those youth toward a world view that celebrates diversity and embraces differences in cultures and traditions.

You are wise to counsel that empathy is central to creating respect and understanding, and that such values musts be taught by word and example in the home. Your “Empathy Pledge” is a specific and inspired way to make that happen – to first look within ourselves, and then teach and model empathy for those within our home and circle of influence, and then help promote empathy in our broader community.

I agree with your premise that the way to change the world is to begin with myself, and then within my family and friends, and then be a light that shines brightly wherever I go. If the rising generation can be nurtured in such an environment of empathy, then we have real hope for a future of respect, understanding and peace.

You have motivated me to implement your “Empathy Pledge” personally, and in my family, and in my law firm, and in my service in my church and the interfaith community.

Thank you for sharing these important thoughts.”
Third Place Award
Donna A. Calabrese, Erie, CO

“How Can We Obey The Law Against War?”

From the devastation of WWI, the United States took a robust leadership role to create the KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT (a.k.a. THE PACT OF PARIS), August 27, 1928, along with the efforts of 15 nations to “outlaw war” and to use peaceful means to settle disputes. The 2 Articles of Incorporation stated: 1) To renounce; and 2) To never use even the threat of war to resolve international conquest. Soon afterwards, 47 additional countries also signed the Pact.

Over time, loopholes were discovered. The attempts at Peace and accountability weakened, sanctions and enforcement for non-compliance weakened, while the exploitation of the term “self-defense” stronger. As with others, The US has become accustomed to prioritizing monstrous budgets to fight and miniscule budgets for peacemaking efforts. The win-lose concept ignores the peacemaking question: “What about its moral strength?” We seem to have forgotten over time.

One war example is when President Trump giving the US military a directive “to use the weapons at your disposal” in our war and curtailing peace efforts domestically. To overcome this mentality, we need to teach Americans the facts on how to arrive at peace and using a moral strength. How? So how do we plant the seeds of Peace?

1. REQUIRE GOVERNMENT TRAINING: Require official bipartisan Peace trainings on effective communication and strategies to achieve peace. The Senate, for instance, has a rudimentary practical orientation program. Senators-elect affirm their oath to defend the US Constitution. Behind the scenes, another private ceremony takes place with the Wartime Loyalty Oath (Ironclad Test Oath), to make full pledge on nation’s enemies- domestic of foreign. Yet there is no pledge, nor training, on how to obtain Peace.

2. ENHANCE USIP & INITIATE DEPT OF PEACE: “The United States Institute of Peace Act that passed in 1984, calls for the Institute to "serve the people and the Government through the widest possible range of education and training, basic and applied research opportunities, and peace information services on the means to promote international peace and the resolution of conflicts among the nations and peoples of the world without recourse to violence." Today’s active programs are in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan, and elsewhere. The problem: There are only about 300 employees, and underutilized, with a scarce budget that needs to be bolstered. Separately, we need a bipartisan ratification of an Executive branch, Cabinet-level, Department of Peace that has been chronically stalled.
3. **REINSTATE BUDGET FOR DOMESTIC TERRORISM INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS:** The Department of Homeland Security surprisingly has currently disbanded a group of intelligence analysts who focus on growth in right-wing extremism and domestic terrorism. The President has projected concern with border terrorism ($5B wall) and international terrorism, but wanes our domestic terrorism budget (remember the terrorism caused by Timothy McVeigh), while other countries are enhancing their domestic securities. We need a reversal- Now.

4. **FULLY REINSTATE OUR “PEACEMAKERS,” USDOJ-COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICE:** Concerns have risen in 2019 about eliminating our National Mediators. The Hill stated: “*Trump budget would end agency that resolves differences in a time of deep division.*” The CRS was founded by the Civil Rights Act concerning civil and human rights such as race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability, using mediation, facilitation for community conflicts and tensions. It works with the state, local governments, civil society organizations, and community leaders, to derive viable, mutual understandings, and solutions to the community’s challenges.” Problem: Peacemakers are the seeds of peace to communities. Without them, are we cultivating Peacekeeper authority-over environments?

5. **CREATE “GLOBAL PEACE RELATIONS SERVICE INSTITUTE”:** Develop a collectively conscious concept of Peace globally by training and Certifying elite international Mediators in Global Conflict Resolution, and to advance the potency of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and address different global affairs from a multi-national perspective. The Conflict Resolution Institute at University of Denver, for instance, could provide the advanced training as an international hub, drawing distinguished academia and professionals worldwide.

6. **HEIGHTEN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMS:** RJ programs are globally utilized because of their effectiveness with communities. They are used in schools, communities, and in the legal system, and in pockets throughout the US, to repair the harm caused.

Conclusively, to legally follow The Kellogg-Briand Pact in the United States, we have to raise awareness, educate and train people, use moral strength to guide us, and demand proper bipartisan oversight with appropriate funding, and create solutions. We need to demand bipartisan endorsements from decision-makers to ensure protection and stabilization, transparency, and peace within our own nation. We need to be the forerunners of Peace and preserve our future generations by demanding our right, make reconciliation with, and bolster the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

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**Response:** This essay was directed to Dr Karen Feste, PhD., Founder and Graduate Director, Conflict Resolution Institute and Professor, Josef Korbel School of International Studies University of Denver.

No response was received by May 15.
Honorable Mention
Rev. Marvis L. Hardy, Chicago, IL

“The Kellogg-Briand Pact: How Can We Obey the Law Against War?”

In the brisk August morning air, 11,000 men women, and children could be seen journeying towards the now barren battlefields of northern Belgium. During World War 1, the small city of Ypres, Belgium, reported over 300,000 men lost their lives at this site.

A decade earlier, World War 1 was raging. A decade earlier 9 million military personnel were brutally killed; over 7 million maimed and permanently disabled. And in August of 1928, 11,000 pilgrims marched to honor the memory of the known and the unknown fallen soldiers. The war widows and their families marched to the Menin Gate Memorial, marking the starting point of the roads that led the Allied soldiers to the front line.

World War 1 (WW1) was the world’s most brutal and cruel war. The Germans first used poison gas attacks at Ypres, followed by the development of French and British chemical weapons. Many historians agree that WW1 contributed to the growth of the Nazi Party and other nationalist ideologies globally. It was an era of hate and tension, as nationalism quickly moved across the globe.

And as worldwide unrest grew, the need for an international body that promoted peace and security globally became more apparent. In response, the Allied Nations formed the League of Nations to enforce the Treaty of Versailles and other peace agreements that concluded World War I. Prior to this effort, American industrialist Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, charged with “hastening the abolition of international war, the foulest blot upon our civilization,” (A. Carnegie, 1910). After the First World War, there were ongoing efforts globally to find ways to ensure that world nations would not be drawn into another war.

With the assistance of the Carnegie foundations James Shotwell and Nicholas Butler, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Aristide Briand proposed a peace pact to outlaw war. In 1927, 9 years after WWI ended, Briand published an open letter containing the proposal. By 1928, the final version of the pact, had two important clauses: “the first outlawed war as an instrument of national policy; and the second called upon signatories to settle their disputes by peaceful means.” And on August 27, 1928, with flags flying across Paris to honor this great event, fifteen nations, including Germany, signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact outlawing war. Another forty-seven nations later followed suit, with the pact eventually signed by over 60 nations, including the United States.
However, ninety one years later, the world still yearns for peace. Today, how can we obey the law against war? In a world engulfed in conflict, from the minor to the extreme, peacemaking is critical. In the midst of tension and conflict that could lead to war, we must persistently seek that beacon of light which streams from a heavenly host. We must perpetually move towards a beloved community, where all are loved, respected and honored.

It is in this vein, that I propose Restorative Justice (RJ) as a means to obey this law against war. Just as Dr. Martin L. King’s theology of non-violence worked in the 20th century, I believe Restorative Justice can work as a strategy to sustain peace in the 21st century. Dr. King introduced us to his theology of non-violence in an attempt to restore a nation divided by racial hatred, bigotry and injustice. Today, in the 21st century, in a world engulfed in conflict, a theology of justice that restores the beloved community can help move us closer to peace.

In 2004, California District Attorney, Kamala Harris established an RJ program called the ‘Back on Track initiative,’ a reentry program for prison inmates. Initiative participants pled guilty in exchange for a deferral of sentencing. The program was successful in reducing recidivism rates. The purpose of Restorative Justice is to provide an opportunity to resolve conflicts with restoration, instead of retribution.

If the Kellogg-Briand Pact was the first step; then Restorative Justice is the next step towards peace. The Pact challenges the world community to come to the discussion table, before arming themselves for war. Additionally, Restorative Justice is not one-sided, where one side has to give up something to the other side. Restorative Justice means accommodating the needs of all parties involved to ensure harmonious alliances that can dwarf differences to brook peace.

In the words of Dr. ML King, “Humanity is waiting for something other than blind imitation of the past… We must be hammers shaping a new society rather than anvils molded by the old.”

Hence it is in this vein that I pose the question to presidential candidate Kamala Harris, who has already implemented a program substituting retribution for restoration. The question is: What Restorative Justice initiatives for peace do you envision for America, if you were to win the US presidency?

1 https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/kellogg


Response: This essay was directed to Kamala Harris, US Senator from California.

No response was received by May 15.
Dear Mr. Evans,

My name is Selena and I'm an interfaith minister in Colorado. I have a Master of Divinity, and specialize in interfaith understanding and dialogue. I have studied more than a dozen languages and made understanding the history and culture of other nations my focus. I dream of a world that can use diplomacy and dialogue to repair conflict before it becomes war. The West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition sponsors this Peace Essay Competition and I chose to write to you as someone who I consider an influential peacemaker.

This then is our question, how can we obey the law against war? Your character, Steve Rogers, has been asked what the Captain would be without a war. Despite this, he has proven himself a leader in and out of battle. As an activist, you have used your voice against war and many other forms of hatred. Individually as members of the human race, I believe peace is easily attainable - even desired. As a group - as a nation - I fear we may find it a more challenging task. From a capitalist viewpoint, as long as war continues to make money, will our financial and political leaders ever be willing to give it up? I personally have heard people say that war is too profitable to ever end. As citizens of a capitalist nation, this makes the question more challenging. Do you believe we can end war or are we doomed to continue to repeat the same horrors again and again? How would Captain America obey the law against war?

I have heard you’re working on a new website to allow a place for people of differing opinions and beliefs to learn about all sides of issues in a safe space. This, in addition to your public posts has many of us saying that you are very like your character, Captain America. You’ve become a hero to many. I’m grateful for your voice and your heart. You have offered hope that some of the strongest voices are still willing to fight for the good and that good is attainable for everyone, not only the wealthy. Hope is contagious. And you are helping it spread. Thank you.

You may already know that on August 27, 1928, 15 nations (including the United States) signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, outlawing war, they were joined later by others for a total of 63 countries. In light of the fact that WWII, as well as many other conflicts followed the ratification of this pact, it has been called ineffective, even useless. If I was writing this essay 20 years ago, or even 10, I would ask you to help me spread the word of this agreement, also known as the Pact of Paris. I would still have had hope that law would prevail if enough citizens knew that it existed. I fear we’ve reached a point, based on the current state of affairs in our country, where even if every single person had the information that the US agreed war to be illegal, it would not be enough. The United States as a nation has gone too far past being persuaded by truth.

So I’m asking for your help as a US citizen, a leader, and force for good in this world. I’m asking you to help me gather a brain trust of action. Who do we assemble and how do we work together to help the nation and the world WANT to obey the law against war? Avenging works in the movies, though I fear it will be too late for the planet. I believe we can be proactive and lead the world to help save itself before avenging is necessary. What is the push we need to bring this team together?
I’m exceedingly thankful for you taking the time to read my essay and consider the future. From you and the others who have not given up, I am grateful.

Yours in gratitude and fellowship,

Reverend Selena A. Naumoff, MDiv
PO Box 262
Littleton, Colorado, 80120 USA
SelenaANaumoff@gmail.com

Response: This essay was directed to Actor Chris Evans.

No response was received by May 15.
Honorable Mention
Kenneth Okpomo, Lagos, Nigeria

“How Can We Obey the Law Against War?”

Introduction

Armed conflicts between two or more nations have reduced somewhat in this era. Internal conflicts arising from political repression and the dominance of certain racial/ethnic groups over others are now rampant. Civilians are the ones that suffer the most during catastrophic wars.

Some examples of wars and their fatalities

In the 1990s Yugoslav wars (that eventually broke the Balkan nation into its constituent republics) over 100,000 lives were lost. The Rwandan genocide orchestrated by the Hutu Army in alliance with the Interahamwe militia had seen the massacre of over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in a hundred days. The ruinous Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars (occasioned by wanton rape, mutilations, dismemberment, arson, use of child soldiers, etc., by pro-government forces and rebel groups) had posted casualty figures of 250,000 and 50,000 deaths respectively.

Today’s internal armed conflicts are mainly triggered by power struggle, ethnic and religious rancor, extremism, the rise and spread of Jihadi movements, etc. In the Central African Republic where Muslim Séléka fighters are embroiled in fratricidal onslaughts against their Christian anti-Balaka counterparts at least 5,186 deaths have occurred. Adherents of the two faiths have been the prime targets of the atrocious attacks. In northern Mali, an estimated 1,689 to 3,713 persons were killed during the ill-fated Tuareg rebellion. Recent attacks on Fulani communities in central Mali has left over 130 dead in cold blood.

In Syria, regime forces have repeatedly launched chemical attacks on opposition strongholds. Rebels have attacked Alawite villages in reprisal. An estimated 400,000 persons have lost their lives so far. The Islamic State, exploiting the political vacuum in Syria and the Sunni-Shia rift in Iraq, had entrenched itself in vast swathes of areas. Stamping its reign of terror, ISIS had beheaded, crucified and immolated ‘infidels’ and ‘non-conformists’ while it confined captured Yazidi women and girls to sexual slavery. Yemen’s protracted civil war has resulted in 60,000 deaths. Airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition against Houthi rebels has reportedly hit civil gatherings killing many. Abductions by the various foreign-backed militias are also rife. The Arabian Peninsula country is presently on the brink of famine following the siege on the port of Hodeidah. Libya, South Sudan and Ukraine have also descended into civil wars that have caused the death of thousands of innocent civilians.
Recommendations

During war premeditated attacks on civilians, aid workers, medics, as well as the dehumanization of prisoners of war, are prohibited under International Humanitarian Law. Therefore getting state and non-state armed actors to comply with the laws against wars is crucial. Collective force (which the Kellogg-Briand pact recommends) can help to restrain aggressors. Using existing protocols in the United Nations, in regional alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Union of South American Nations, Economic Community of West African States, Southern Africa Development Community, among others, emergency meetings can be called up. There the decision to send intervention forces to war zones can be collectively taken to save civilian lives. But the associated bureaucratic bottlenecks have to be removed. How quickly these political decisions are reached, and intervention forces mobilized and deployed, is often dictated by the national interests of individual countries and available financial resources. At the UN Security Council, getting the P5 +1 member on the same page and wavelength on key issues is always difficult. Russia and China often disagrees with the U.S, France, UK and Germany. Greater cooperation among these veto-wielding states is necessary to prevent and curtail wars.

Rights activists will need to step up pressure on world leaders to ban the sales of arms (AK-47s, RPGs, Kalashnikovs, grenades, landmines, gunships, warplanes, etc.) to belligerent nations that indiscriminately target civilians during warfare. Global effort should also be geared at curtailing the proliferation of small and light weapons (which feeds illegal arms bazaars and fuels insurgencies) and the development of killer robots and fully autonomous weapons systems. Those who indulge in war crimes and/or crimes against humanity must be held accountable to end the prevailing culture of impunity. The Kellogg-Briand pact has already set the pace by becoming the legal backbone on which persons who plotted and perpetrated World War II were tried by the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals.

Concluding remark

The prevention of wars should be the world’s primary focus. The Kellogg-Briand recommends the peaceful settlement of disputes. To this end, national and regional platforms for dispute resolutions (to facilitate dialogue and negotiations between and among parties to a dispute or conflict) should be strengthened to complement the role of international courts and other arbitration mechanisms. Conflict resolution measures should be hinged on honest reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The eradication of poverty and entrenchment of social justice will help to prevent impoverished and disenfranchised youths from seeking refuge in terrorist organizations and militant groups.

Response:

This essay was directed to Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary General of the United Nations.

No response was received by May 15.
The Peace Essay Contest

Credit for this Peace Essay Contest ultimately goes to David Swanson and Kathy Kelly, two very active peace advocates whose efforts we admire and applaud. Their dedication to promoting peace is witnessed by Swanson’s having been nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize and Kelly, three times. It was Swanson’s book “When the World Outlawed War,” a volume Kelly most thoughtfully gave to Frank Goetz, that inspired Goetz with the idea for the Peace Essay Contest.

The world outlawed war in 1928 when 15 nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact (also known as the Pact of Paris) that attempted to eliminate war as an instrument of national policy. Nearly all nations eventually joined the original 15 in agreeing to settle international disputes via peaceful means.

The West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition (WSFPC), an affiliate of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), regards the Kellogg-Briand Pact a major advancement of civilization. It should not be the world’s best-kept secret.

So, WSFPC established the Peace Essay Contest in 2012 to inform the public, particularly students, about this truly historic event and promised $1,000 to the author of the best essay. Awards of $1,000, $300 and $100 for the top three essays were presented in 2013.

The following year, we transformed the competition into an Essay/Response Contest to emphasize the need for essays with the potential to move us closer to a world without war. So, in addition to writing an essay, contestants were required to send their essay to one or more individuals who could help promote knowledge of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and peace on earth. Previous years have seen essays sent to governors, various other elected officials at the local and national levels, college faculty and administrators, news editors and officers at organizations dedicated to promoting peace.

Special thanks go to David Swanson and the Rev. William O’Shea for making this Seventh Annual Awards Luncheon such an inspiring and memorable event.

We congratulate the winners, and we invite your comments and suggestions regarding this project.

May this booklet promote and help continue the global conversation on ending war and all violence and be a most fervent prayer for peace.

WSFPC will announce the Rules for the 2020 Peace Essay/Response Contest in September 2019. No major changes are anticipated in this, our eighth contest. Both the essays submitted and the responses documented will be judged.

For more information on the Peace Essay Contest, contact Coordinator Walt Zlotow, zlotow@hotmail.com.