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### **Why I Believe War Is Not the Answer**

When we evaluate war, we are not smearing with shame ancestral soldiers. Troops are at the mercy of policymakers. And policymakers are in the grips of cultural and psychological habits. So the point is not to condemn anybody but to figure out whether there are better options and why they weren't pursued.

Let's begin with the centuries of war against Native Americans. Why? Because the fears, biases, and goals driving U.S. foreign policies back then continue to steer U.S. policies today in Latin America, the Mideast, and beyond. And, just as policymakers thought they were doing the right thing back then for the sake of national security, profits, railroads, miners, ranchers, and Westernization, policymakers think they are doing the right thing now. Imagine the options: Would the U.S. be a better nation today, socially, economically, environmentally, or spiritually, if Native Americans had been regarded with appreciation and friendship? What types of human relations program could have nurtured caring and cooperation? What legislation could have ensured the fair preservation and distribution of land and resources?

Consider the Revolutionary War. Why? If we do not, we fail to create nonviolent alternatives for revolutionaries around the world seeking escape from oppression. Yes, we can celebrate the Fourth of July, but was war necessary in order to enjoy today's positive aspects of life? Prove it. President John Adams estimated that one-third in the Colonies were for the war, one-third against, and one-third indifferent. Why? Did the war fix the problems it was intended to solve? The Patriots wrote a list of grievances against Britain. But a caseload of grievances alone does not make a case for war, for each grievance may have a solution that does not require war.

Consider the Civil War. The war did not stop the exploitation of labor in the South or North. Nor did it sever the connection between wealth and power that stifles economic justice and plagues us today. Freed slaves were subject to lynching, starvation, and the sharecropping system that trapped them in false debt. Why was no effort made in congressional negotiation to link the abolition of slavery with the easing of economic conditions for the South? The North seemed to be forcing the South into a corner, to be squeezing it, by insisting simultaneously on low prices for Southern cotton, high prices for Northern shipping and manufactured goods, a tariff that favored the North, and the end of slavery. Instead of creating economic conditions and human relations initiatives that would facilitate the South's survival without slaves, the North seemed to use the slavery issue as ammunition to form hatred toward the South.

The essence of democracy is "caring equally for all," and we must seek to resolve conflict rather than take sides. Leaders should not manipulate issues of inhumanity, whether massacres or slavery, in order to lure the compassionate into support for war, especially when attention to that inhumanity cloaks hidden purposes of war, when inhumanity could be better addressed non-violently, and when supporters are expected to ignore the inhumanity of the war itself.