

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

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I am the child of Vietnam War era parents. I am the grandchild of World War II veterans and the great-grandchild/great-grandnephew of World War I veterans. Throughout my growing up years discussions of current events in history have occurred at our kitchen table. War, and its consequences, has been a constant thread in our family talks.

One of my earliest memories on this topic is my 91-year-old maternal grandmother, a bronze star awardee from World War II (rare among female veterans), saying with great emotion, “Wars are made by old men in which young men die.” My dad, whose age narrowly allowed him to escape the Vietnam draft but whose close college friends included veterans of that war who became surrogate uncles of mine, introduced me to a book entitled *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* by Chris Hedges. Mr. Hedges has a headnote in his introduction which reads, “Only the dead have seen the end of war.” – Plato.

In our family mealtime talks on the subject of war and peace, we have more often than not realistically recognized that wars will not go away but rather our efforts as humans should be to strive to make them as infrequent as possible. To accomplish this worthwhile goal our discussions have identified the acceptable methods to use. The main methods, I have learned, are: 1) The political process; 2) Mutual trade and negotiations fostering dependence between competitive groups; 3) Popular expressions against war; 4) Social and cultural interactions between all peoples.

Throughout my years of schooling in the River Valley School District I have been significantly involved in the theater arts. Up to my junior year in high school I carried a career aspiration of wanting to be an actor and to perform in works that in their own way encouraged and depicted peaceful outcomes. Consequently, much to my amusement, I have found myself frequently cast as the wise senior resolver of conflicts. Even as I have studied Shakespeare in school and at American Players Theatre performances, I have been drawn to those parts of his plays which explain the resolution of conflict.

With my enrollment in a remarkable anatomy class junior year, I found my play line memorization skills unexpectedly useful and frankly enjoyable in that introductory subject of the medical sciences. Much to my surprise, I seem to have pivoted my career goals toward a future of helping people through medicine. I can imagine myself play-acting funny characters to put children at their ease as I examine them or swab their arm before administering a shot.

My grandma and my parents are regular contributors to the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Doctors Without Borders. The work of that organization blows me away. Its work embodies all four of the methods listed above that foster peace. To spend a portion of my adult years working for some such organization would be a fulfillment of why I think war is not the answer.

I will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a freshman in September 2014. I recently learned that the university continues to this day to be the number one generator of volunteers to the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps beginnings in the Kennedy Administration, even as the Vietnam War escalated, shows how we humans can hold both visions of peace and war in the same mind at the same time. Like Doctors Without Borders, to spend a portion of my adult years working for some such organization or the Peace Corps would be another fulfillment of why I think war is not the answer.

At the end of the day it must be every individual’s personal morality and ethics and values that: War must not be the answer. If, as a species, we can think this way then as a worldwide community peace can take hold.