



VETERANS FOR PEACE
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THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Dan Rather to Trump: Dropping bombs does not make you presidential

Former CBS anchor Dan Rather says it's too soon to be praising President Trump for acting “presidential.”

Rather said Sunday on CNN’s “Reliable Sources” that Trump is receiving unwarranted applause for his recent military actions, such as authorizing missile strikes in Syria and dropping a powerful bomb on an ISIS camp in Afghanistan. He has in recent days criticized members of the press he says “lauded” Trump’s actions.

“Dropping bombs, having missile strikes, doesn’t make one presidential,” Rather said.

Instead, Rather said Trump should be judged on his ability to “keep the peace.” He described countries like North Korea, Syria, Iraq and Yemen as “flashpoints” that are “real powder kegs with a real short fuse burning.”

Related: Trump is dialing back his economic promises. Bigly

Rather warned journalists to not allow stories about military strikes to distract from other issues. He said the action in Syria took attention away from stories about Russia’s influence on the election, whether it was intended to do so or not.

“Journalists have a tendency to rally around powder kegs. What’s best for the country is for journalists to be skeptical,” he said. “Not cynical, but skeptical.”

Rather was the anchor and managing editor of “CBS Evening News” for more than two decades. He now hosts an interview series on AXS TV and runs a production company.

In the interview, Rather acknowledged his own shortcomings, saying that he did not ask “enough of the right questions” before the Bush administration invaded Iraq in 2003. Other prominent journalists have expressed similar regrets.

“I think we need to remind ourselves of that today,” Rather said.

It’s not the first time Rather has weighed in on the media’s coverage of Trump.

Rather has used Facebook (FB, Tech30) as a platform to criticize the way some outlets report on Trump’s false statements. During the campaign, he also challenged reporters to not cover Trump like a “normal” presidential nominee.



Can Compassion for Animals Lead to World Peace?

What does compassion for animals have to do with world peace?

To most of us, not much. But, as my husband and co-author Ken Beller and I realized when we were doing research for our book, *Great Peacemakers*, they actually go hand-in-hand.

Studying the lives of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Desmond Tutu, and others was incredibly inspiring; but, it was also somewhat depressing, as we learned about the harsh injustices and violence they experienced. Sometimes we felt overwhelmed and started to ask ourselves,

“How can people be so cruel?”

And that caused us to ask the bigger question,

“What starts violence?”

What Starts Violence?

Like caring people throughout the ages, perhaps you too have asked yourself this question. As we considered many possible answers, the one that seemed to resonate most was that violence begins with disconnection.

How so?

As infants and toddlers, almost everything we encounter is cause for wonder. From the family dog to a caterpillar on the ground, we generally approach them with fascination and connection. In time, though, the actions of people around us can weaken that connection.

Often, those messages start with the treatment of animals and insects. Perhaps we see a parent catching mice in deadly traps, stepping on cockroaches, swatting flies, etc. The lesson is: “They’re just things, not beings. They’re not like us. We matter more.” These actions subtly teach us to see a divide between “us” and “them,” in other words, to “other-ize” them.

This might seem harmless. But this disconnection, repeatedly reinforced by the culture around us, can be a foundation for further abuse of power. For some people, after harming animals, the leap is not so large to later harming humans—children, women, people of other ethnicities, etc.

As humanitarian Dr. Paul Farmer said,
“The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world.”

In fact, animal cruelty is often a gateway crime to human cruelty, as many studies show that a high percentage of criminals who commit violence against people began by abusing animals. For example, of seven U.S. school shootings over five years, all involved boys with a history of animal cruelty. Recognizing this dangerous link, the FBI now tracks animal cruelty crimes alongside other violent crimes.

So, how much human suffering and death could be prevented if we could stop this process by helping children connect with, and not abuse, animals?

As author Bradley Miller said,

“Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child as it is to the caterpillar.”

It is also as valuable to the society.

A Solution to Violence

Continuing our search, we found this point emphasized by several peacemakers, especially Dr. Albert Schweitzer. The German humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize recipient is famous for his medical service in the jungles of Africa. However, he believed his greatest contribution to the world was something else.

During World War I, he was deeply worried about the future of humanity and desperately sought a solution to human violence. But, intensely studying various religions and philosophies, he could not find a solution. Then one day, it suddenly flashed on his mind: Reverence for Life.

Schweitzer explained, Reverence for Life is the realization that each of us wants to live, and we are surrounded by other beings who also want to live.

Just as we want our life to be honored, so should we honor their lives—we did not breathe life into them and have no right to take it from them. He proclaimed,

“Everything that lives has value simply as a living thing, as one of the manifestations of the mystery that is life.”

Could this realization end most human violence?

Schweitzer believed it could. After all, if a person is reluctant to kill a mouse, he or she will probably also be reluctant to kill a fellow human being. Schweitzer declared,

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“Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.”

Peacemaker Perspectives

Looking further, we found similar beliefs shared by many other peacemakers. For example, Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi believed in the ideal of ahimsa (nonviolence toward all living beings), tried to live it to the best of his ability, and said,

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

Also valuing ahimsa, is Vietnamese Buddhist monk and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh, who said,

“If we are motivated to protect the lives of all animals, even the smallest insect, then we will never want to take human life.”

On the other side of the world, we discovered a lesser-known, but influential, figure sharing these beliefs. English scholar Henry Salt wrote extensively on the link between animal wellbeing and human wellbeing, saying,

“...as we treat our fellow beings, ‘the animals,’ so shall we treat our fellow men.”

Similarly, American labor leader Cesar Chavez believed,

“...the basis for peace is respecting all creatures. We cannot hope to have peace until we respect everyone, respect ourselves and all living beings.”

More recently, South African Nobel Peace Prize recipient Desmond Tutu shared,

“I have seen firsthand how injustice gets overlooked when the victims are powerless or vulnerable, when they have no one to speak up for them and no means of representing themselves to a higher authority. Animals are in precisely that position. Unless we are mindful of their interests and speak out loudly on their behalf, abuse and cruelty go unchallenged.”

Perhaps most direct of all, Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, whose beliefs about social justice influenced Gandhi and other peacemakers, proclaimed,

“As long as there are slaughterhouses there will be battlefields.”

A Suggested Practice

So, if violence begins with disconnection, how can we re-

connect?

One way is to first, simply notice the beings around you—your dog or cat, a bird outside your window, a caterpillar on your patio, etc. Look closely at him or her, and think to yourself, “A fellow life form,” or, “A manifestation of the mystery that is life.”

Allow yourself to feel a sense of awe and connection. Perhaps admire his or her beauty and marvel at the fact that you share this planet with such a vast array of fascinating creatures.

In time, you might feel moved to shift some behaviors to help your new friends. For example, you might like to start humanely catching and releasing household “pests,” buying products that are not tested on animals, or removing meat from your diet (even if just one day a week such as with Meatless Mondays.)

By reconnecting with all beings and extending compassion to them, we can enjoy a clearer conscience, greater connection with the community of all life, and the fulfilment of knowing we are saving lives and helping create a less violent, more peaceful, world.

Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, May 4th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held at 24 Uni-
tarian Fellowship Way, Bayside,
Jacob Creek Road. Veterans and
non-veterans are more than wel-
come to come and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to
bring about peace in this complex
world.



Eureka VA Clinic News

Free Legal Information & Consultations – In April, local attorney Thomas Hjerpe, Esq., began offering FREE legal information, referrals, and consultations to veterans. Mr. Hjerpe provides information and consultation on a wide range of concerns, including: Estate Planning, Social Security Disability Claims, Bankruptcy, and other non-criminal matters.

 **Who:** Veterans will be seen on a walk-in, first come, first served, basis.

 **When:** Second Friday of each month. Sign-in begins at 1:00 p.m.

 **Where:** Eureka VA Clinic, 930 West Harris Street (one block west of Winco).

This is a free service being offered by Mr. Hjerpe and neither the VA nor the Eureka Clinic can assume any responsibility or liability for the service(s) provided.

Ice Cream Social & Car/Motorcycle Show – The Eureka VA Clinic will host this social event on

Friday, June 30, 2017

11:30 p.m. to ...

Everyone is welcome to attend and enjoy the event. Car and motorcycle show entries will be limited to veterans. Judging and award categories will be determined. Information on registering an entry will be available at the Eureka VA Clinic and, hopefully, in next month's issue of The Foghorn.

Dog Obedience Classes – Beginning in June, Delilah Huck's Top Dog Puppy & Dog Training will conduct four, 6-week obedience training sessions for veterans and their 4-legged companions. Each class is limited to six dogs. Four "graduates" of the 24-week program will receive an Elk's Club Freedom Grant Scholarship to the Bergin University of Canine Studies in Santa Rosa to receive "Service Dog" training. Enrollment for the reduced fee program will be through the Eureka VA Clinic. *Stand by for further information.*

Your VA Clinic Communications Council contact is:
 'Nate' Lomba  Email: nsloba@reninet.com
 Message phone: (707) 269-0528



Veterans For Peace Condemns U.S. Actions in Syria

Veterans For Peace condemns the illegal U.S. attack in Syria. We call on the Trump Administration to immediately end all military actions in Syria and to begin intense U.S. diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in the region. We call on our members and all those who want an end to U.S. wars to contact the President and Congress, to meet and talk to people about peaceful means to end the war in Syria and hit the streets to make our resistance to war visible.

Call the White House 202-456-1111 and your Senators and Congressional Representatives 202-224-3121 and tell them that military action only increases the dangers and intensifies the humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

Veterans For Peace mourns the deaths of those recently killed in the chemical attack and the hundreds of thousands of lives that have passed over the last six years of this conflict.

The physical effects of a chemical attack and the way it kills is horrendous. The president stated, "No child should ever suffer such horror." But the ongoing war itself is horrific with many more children dying due to countless attacks by all forces involved, disease, and other war related crises. The madness of this multi-sided war must end. We demand the Trump administration remove all military operations within Syria and to stop flooding the region with arms sales.

The United States is not innocent in the death of over 400,000 people in Syria and across the region since 2011. For more than two decades, the U.S. has been the most powerful destabilizing factor in the region. For the last few years, the U.S. has and continues to support and conduct military operations within the borders of Syria with devastating effects, including the bombing and killing of civilians. Further, the 1991 U.S. led invasion of Iraq, the no-fly zones led by U.S. forces, the war in Afghanistan and the second invasion of Iraq are twenty-six years of continuous U.S. military operations. The cumulative effects of U.S. war-making, decisions made as part of the occupation of Iraq and the subsequent rise of ISIL are the most impactful factors in creating the refugee crisis and the regional destabilization the president referred to in his statement.

It should be clear after more than a generation of war that more war and violence as witnessed in last night's attacks will not bring an end to the killing and suffering. There are no positive effects coming out of U.S. involvement in Syria and it only further contributes to the death and destruction of the Syrian people. We call on the President to stop ratcheting up tension at home and around the world. The "peace and harmony" he calls for cannot prevail through cycles of violence.

PEACE POETRY AND ART GO TO PRESS

A collection of poems and art works on themes of peace and justice by Humboldt County high school students is being prepared for publication by Bug Press, under the title Redwood Coast Peace Poetry and Art 2017. The anthology, a project of Veterans For Peace Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 with the help of a grant from Humboldt Area Foundation, is also sponsored by the Humboldt Branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, by the Social Action Committee of Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, and by the Humboldt Chapter of Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Poets and artists from three high schools—St. Bernard's Academy, Eureka High School and Six Rivers Charter High School-- are represented in the collection; as in previous years, the editors have been deeply impressed by the young peoples' thoughtful engagement with troubling and difficult issues.

PEACE POETRY AND ART CELEBRATION

A Celebration honoring the poets and artists, and presenting the new publication, will be held on May 21, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall, 24 Fellowship Way (off Jacoby Creek Road) in Arcata. Poets will be invited to read their work, and artists' work will be displayed. The event is free, and everyone is encouraged to attend.



An Update of the Update: Amy is Home

By Jon Reisdorf

Amy is the army specialist in a previous issue's story: "Proceedng According to Hoyle: A Soldier's Story" which I updated in the last issue of the Foghorn. I asked everyone to keep their fingers crossed for her as she waited interminably for her discharge paperwork to clear. Amy called me last Thursday to let me know she was home safe and sound. She is looking forward to getting on with her life. But she is also graciously agreed to provide me with all the minute details on the process that led to her discharge with a full honorable discharge from the army.

For those new to her story, Amy served two years in the army's drilling reserves prior to signing an active duty contract in September 2016. She had noticed during basic training and training in her occupational speciality that she was experiencing frequent panic attacks and occasionally she struggled with suicidal thoughts which she quickly, and successfully repressed. There was no one thing in her training that triggered these very strong responses. No specific trauma or abuse. From the beginning she openly and bravely shared her struggles. Helping this process was the fact that she didn't blame the army, she just wanted to find out what was going on so she could get on with her career. Her drill instructors, and first sergeants at basic and AIT had assured her that she would eventually acclimatize to army life. When she attended reserve drills however, the panic attacks, heart pounding, difficulty breathing, body shaking continued but would quickly subside when she was out of the environment.

Amy solution to these psychological, emotional problems manifesting in her body was to go all in. She reasoned that if she fully committed to army life she could finally put all those reactions behind her. The local recruiter really pushed this nonsense too. Additionally

the jobs she found in her small town didn't seem to be leading anywhere. So she joined the Big Army. Big mistake.

Arriving at her base in September - I can now mention the actual base - Ft. Wainwright in Alaska - there had recently been three suicides. Soon after her arrival one of her barracks mates committed suicide and she saw the body being wheeled out. Amy began to experience text book symptoms of PTSD. She obsessed about death. She kept seeing the body of her buddy being wheeled out. When she was able to finally sleep, she would dream about death and dying. On her job she became easily irritated and her quiet, Southern ways, gave way to snapping at people for little or no reason. She held it together on her job but off her job she began to experience crying jags and frequent panic attacks. She told her First Sergeant what was going on and he scheduled an appointment with the base Behavioral Health (BH) clinic.

BH at Wainwright is a cut above those of other services and army bases but they still were only interested at this point in treating Amy's symptoms. Amy did not see any real help anywhere on the horizon so in November she called the GI Rights Hotline. After exhausting every possible regulation that might provide her an out I suggested to Amy that we focus on getting a discharge for an adjustment disorder. I have had excellent results from obtaining an evaluation from the Civilian Medical Resources Network (CMRN) under the direction of Dr. Howard Waitskin a widely respected psychiatrist, teacher, author and a former Conscientious Objector and a member of Veterans For Peace. In March, 2005 Dr. Waitskin recognized the good work being done by the Hotline and offered to help. Like the Hotline, CMRN operates on a shoestring by a dedicated band of volunteers led by Waitskin. I submitted the request for help on the CMRN's confidential website and offered to do the intake interview.

Howard Waitskin has developed a beautiful intake instrument which - independent of anything else - produces a validated psychological instrument that has to be taken seriously by any behavioral health specialist.

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Additionally the three part intake interview can be done by a trained amateur such as myself. On top of that, the intake interview is followed up by a phone or Skype interview with the client by a health care professional. This volunteer, supervised by Howard Waitskin can give the Hotline counselor the exact right document to use in requesting intervention from congressional offices, the chain of command or therapists in behavioral health.

I completed the intake which revealed PTSD, major depression, panic attacks and suicidal ideation. From what Amy shared, it seemed likely to me that her PTSD and other symptoms was related to the four recent suicides at Wainwright. That did not turn out to be true. The interview with a CMRN professional provided Amy and me with exactly what we needed: a previously unaddressed childhood trauma that finally explained what was causing Amy's reactions to being surrounded by so many males. The skype interview was conducted by a true hero of the CMRN, Nicole Baltrushes, MD. Nicky works with survivors of torture and sexual trauma who have been lucky enough to be accepted for refugee status under the Obama administration policies. She also volunteers for the Hotline.

Amy brought the CMRN evaluation to the BH at Fort Wainwright. As I said, the BH there is a cut above. They do not follow the prevailing attitude of most BH's which put band aides on gaping psychological wounds and bully their patients to "suck it up." BH embraced Nicky's evaluation. They actually listened to Amy and therefore played down her PTSD. What is supposed to happen is that when a person on permanent duty is found to have a pre existing condition - mental or physical - they should receive a medical board. But Amy and BH knew she would never be able to deal with the year or two of struggle needed to complete the medical discharge she is entitled to. Instead they shaped the army's official evaluation so it would allow her full honorable where she could be treated at the VA after she is out. They recommended to command that Amy be discharged on the basis of an adjustment disorder. Commands are supposed to but do not always follow BH's recommendations. So

Amy used her first sergeant and captain's open door policy and courageously shared the trauma. Everyone who heard the details understood why Amy could no longer be in the army and was determined to do what they could to bring her home.

Due to a bizarre set of circumstances, Amy's discharge - sought by everyone up and down the chain of command at Wainwright - took nearly 5 months to achieve. Amy and I have discussed the reasons for this, some of which I shared in last month's Foghorn. Now that Amy is out we are going to have a deep debrief which I hope will provide some additional valuable insights into how counselors can better serve our clients. At the end of May, I will be attending the yearly conference of the Gi Rights Hotline at the Stony Point Center in New York sponsored by local peace organizations where I will get a chance to renew friendships with my colleagues and share my findings.

Once again, I want to thank Chapter 56 of Veterans For Peace. Our local node of the Gi Rights Hotline could not exist without its financial and emotional support. Anyone wishing to support the Gi Rights Hotline or the Civilian Medical Resources Network are encouraged to visit our websites and donate. girightshotline.org google the Civilian Medical Resources Network for the .net website address. Those who feel they might like to train with either organization can call me at our local Hotline office in Arcata - 707-826-0165.





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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.



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**Call for information from a network of nonprofit
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