

In Memory and Honor: No More War

Speech at Anti-War Rally, Washington Mall

Armistice Day, November 11th, 1998, Washington, D.C.

Today's gathering is about memory and honor. We gather to remember the end of World War I and to honor the dead and the veterans of war. As we reflect on the meaning of those words--memory and honor-- in the context of war and the millions of people who have been killed in wars this century, we remember the reality that war is hell on earth, and we realize that the greatest honor we can give to the victims and veterans of war is to commit ourselves to abolishing war forever.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, the largest, oldest, interfaith peace organization in the US and the world, was born at the beginning of World War I, and has worked tirelessly to oppose and end every war since then, and to uphold the vision of nonviolence espoused by FOR leaders like Gandhi, Jane Addams, Dr. King, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Daniel and Philip Berrigan and Thich Nhat Hanh. In a world addicted to violence, we offer the wisdom of nonviolence, the transforming path of love and truth which renounces violence and killing and seeks justice for all humanity.

If we seriously remember the horror of war and want to honor those who have died, we have to confess that war doesn't work; that violence never solves anything; that wars only continue the downward spiral of violence; and that we can do better, as Gandhi showed; we can become people of nonviolence.

The times require that all of us resist our government's ongoing plans for war and mass murder; work for the abolition of war and the causes of war; dismantle our weapons; and turn the

Pentagon into a hospital as Roosevelt envisioned in 1945; to begin the social healing process and learn the way of nonviolence.

And so, in memory and honor, we pledge today to oppose the Pentagon's plans to kill, its latest target being the children of Iraq. Over 1 million Iraqis, mostly children, have died from the unjust US economic sanctions since the Persian Gulf massacre. Those sanctions must end immediately. Clinton must not be allowed to bomb Iraq. He doesn't have to bomb Iraq. There are creative nonviolent alternatives available. We can let the children live.

In memory and honor, we pledge today to help close the US School for the study of assassination, the School of Americas at Fort Benning, GA. Next week, 10,000 of us will remember the 9th anniversary of the massacre of my six Jesuit brothers in El Salvador. Over 2000 of us will cross the line to say, Stop the killing, start the healing.

In memory and honor, we pledge today to oppose the Pentagon's ongoing involvement in the 35 wars currently being fought and its sale of weapons to all sides. We pledge to resist the US maintenance of thousands of nuclear weapons. We denounce the real crime--not the Monica Lewinsky scandal--but the maintenance of these weapons of mass destruction and the plans to kill other human beings, and we will continue to denounce our government's illegal criminal activity.

In memory and honor, we pledge today to worship the God of peace, not the false god of war; the God of nonviolence, not the false god of violence; the God of justice; not the false gods of injustice; the God of compassion and love, not the false gods of hate and fear; the God of reconciliation and forgiveness, not the false god of revenge. War is never justified. God never blesses war. We never have the right to kill another human being. There are nonviolent

alternatives and solutions, so we don't have to kill one another. Indeed, we are ordered not to kill.

In memory and honor, we pledge today to obey the spiritual commandments: Beat your swords into plowshares; study war no more; love your enemies; don't bomb them.

Today, we pledge to pursue the dream of a new nonviolent world, where there is no more violence, no more injustice, no more racism; no more sexism; no more executions; no more starvation; no more homelessness; no more poverty; no more refugees; no more torture; no more World Wars; no more Hiroshimas; no more Pentagon; no more CIA; no more Trident Subs; no more nuclear weapons; no more war.

Just before he was assassinated 50 years ago, Gandhi said: “We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.”

Yesterday, I watched the United Nations’ General Assembly discuss the topic of nonviolence for the first time in its history and declare the years 2001-2010 a “Decade for Nonviolence for the Children of the World.” It’s really an historic breakthrough, a sign of hope, and a challenge to us all to carry on the mission of disarming our hearts and disarming the world.

My dear friends, in memory and in honor of the whole human family and the God of peace, we pledge today to resist the insanity of violence and to live in the Spirit, the truth, the wisdom, the sanity of nonviolence.

May we be pioneers and apostles of nonviolence, and help unveil those dazzling new discoveries which Gandhi and Dr. King dreamed of.

May the God of peace bless us all. Thank you.

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