



Culture of Peace: The cost of war vs. the cost of peace

BY **DAN DAVIS** November 05, 2018

PEACE! What is it?

Amity, harmony, concord and tranquility are some of the synonyms. There are many definitions of peace. Sometimes, it is just a word we use, with hope.

For me and, I believe, most war veterans, it has a striking meaning — the absence of war (or whatever euphemism armed conflict receives) is something we seldom experience. War for us is always there lurking, even when it is not thought about, because it has “invaded” our cellular makeup. It creeps into our psyche, uninvited or even invited at times. Often there are struggles with nightmares, flashbacks, alcoholism, drug abuse and behavioral issues. War trauma, like other traumas from rape or assault, is always there, even with, thankfully, help and treatment. Most veterans, even with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), can and do become good and productive citizens, despite the struggles.

However, what I really want to address is something that seldom comes to most minds. That is the cost of war. Perhaps plural would be more appropriate, because they are many and varied. Intellectually we know this, but they seldom come to mind. I like to call them wasted treasures.

Of course, we think of the wasted trillions and trillions of dollars (whatever that means) and the number of American soldiers killed and, oh yeah, wounded. Seldom if ever is thought given to the families and friends of those killed, maimed and traumatized. Or, what about the combatants who we like to term “enemies” — and often worse — in the dehumanization process? What of their loved ones traumatized by what they witnessed, knew of, lost or experienced?

I often urge people to put themselves in the place of a Vietnamese, Iraqi, Afghani, etc., etc. person and think if it is your country, the USA, “invaded” by a foreign army, and you are subjected by outsiders (and your own) to the horrors of war. In Viet Nam in 1968, I was commanding a small infantry advisory team and we lived with the Vietnamese.

My first standing order was, “You will treat the Vietnamese with respect that would be due to your own people at home! This is their home!” The Vietnamese, like our soldiers, were stoic and bore up, mostly not outwardly exhibiting their moral wounds — often for years or even decades. PTSD is truly a moral injury.

Obviously, there are numerous other “costs of war,” not the least of which is extensive environmental damage. All of the movement of troops and equipment, and attacks by air, including napalm and white phosphorus, are horrific. Then there is Agent Orange, the insidious toxin sprayed over the country and people which is still causing death and destruction (including its cousins Roundup, glyposate, etc., extensively used today to poison land, crops and people).

Rogue Valley Veterans for Peace, Chapter 156 of the national organization (vfp.org), works to advance the cause of peace and help make people aware of the cost of war.

Please, please VOTE! We intended to fight for that.

Dan Davis is a member of Veterans For Peace and managing director at D2X Associates, creating power plant designs for VA hospitals. He will be the speaker for Veterans for Peace at its Veterans Day observance from 2-3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 11, as they honor Southern Oregon Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at the World Peace Flame Monument at the Thalden Pavilion, 155 Walker Ave. on The Farm at Southern Oregon University. The Rogue Valley Peace Choir will sing. This honoring service through peaceful action is organized and sponsored by the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission.

Email comments and questions to ashlandcpc@gmail.com. The ACPC website is www.ashlandcpc.org; like the commission on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission; follow twitter.com/AshlandPeace on Twitter. All are welcome to join the ACPC’s Talking Circle at 11 a.m. each Tuesday and Community Meeting at 4 p.m. each Wednesday, both at the ACPC office, 33 First St., Suite 1, diagonally across Lithia Way from the Ashland Post Office.