OMNI NEWSLETTER ON KILLING #2, December 28, 2011. For a Culture of Peace, Compiled by Dick Bennett

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Those who do not make human beings the center of their concern soon lose the capacity to make any ethical choices, for they willingly sacrifice others in the name of the politically expedient and practical. Dwight Macdonald wrote in “The Root Is Man,”

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REPORTING DEATHS OF CIVILIANS KILLED IN US WARS

Northwest Arkansas Times
Dear Editor:

We can thank the Northwest Arkansas Times and its sister newspapers for printing the names of our soldiers killed in our present wars. Many have been killed, inevitably: the Afghan and Iraq wars are longer than WWI and WWII. The dead deserve remembrance, even those who enlisted to fight;
and disclosure is the business of a newspaper. But their number is small compared to the number of civilians killed. During the twentieth century, wars killed more and more civilians, from the one-to-nine ratio of civilian-to-soldier mortality in WWI to nine-to-one in many of the conflicts occurring after the Cold War. For its toll on civilians in war, it’s called the gruesome century, or the century of slaughter.

This reality makes me reflect on the immense disproportion of our newspapers’ reporting of combatant and civilian deaths: every US soldier identified; zero civilians. Even the pressures of patriotism and ethnocentrism combined seem inadequate to explain such extremely distorted reporting.

Do the editors believe their readers so undiscerning they cannot perceive the disparity, or so unfeeling they do not care? Do they think we have abandoned to xenophobia our lifetime commitment to protecting women, children, the elderly, or that we think only our vulnerable deserve sympathy? Do they think we have no concern for the blood spilled by the populations in our wars, or we are indifferent to the human costs of wars?

If they do, they blunder, for many of us can imagine the deaths of other nations’ innocents, and each attempt to erase them only diminishes for us the credibility and authority of the newspapers.

A multimedia presentation of the New York Times’ investigation into civilian casualties in Libya caused by NATO airstrikes.

ETHNOCENTRISM, HIERARCHIES, DEHUMANIZATION
Book by David L. Smith, *Less Than Human*

“A Philosophy of Genocide’s Roots”


Consider, as Americans are so wont to do these days, the zombie. Once, he was a person, just like you or me, but then he changed. Now, despite his outward resemblance to a human being, he is a different thing altogether. He cannot disguise himself. He cannot change back. Another minus: He yearns to sink his zombie-plague-spreading teeth into your brain.

*LESS THAN HUMAN*

*Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others*


Excerpt: ‘Less Than Human’ (macmillan.com)

But no cloud lacks a silver lining: He is a convenient image for people you despise — as in the Tucson gunman Jared Loughner’s “zombie grin,” as in the “zombie children” whom Amy Chua’s “Tiger Mother” philosophy supposedly produces, as in the “climate zombies,” right-wingers who question the science of global warming. In “Less Than Human,” the philosopher David Livingstone Smith explains why this sort of talk is not superficial metaphor-slinging. **Dehumanization** — representing people to be lesser, nonhuman creatures, as when police officers label crimes against criminals as “N.H.I.” (“No Humans Involved”), or when Muammar el-Qaddafi calls his critics “stray dogs” — isn’t just shabby rhetoric. **Dehumanization** is a mind-set, as Smith writes, that “decommissions” our “moral inhibitions” about mistreating fellow human beings. Encased in law and custom, this psychological process has often licensed slavery, genocide and countless other cruelties.

And it is, Smith writes in this stalwart attempt to tame the mystery with philosophy, a moral and cognitive problem as old as history. He quotes Amenemhet, a pharaoh who ruled nearly 4,000 years ago, describing his conquests: “I subdued lions, I captured crocodiles. . . . I made the Asiatics do the dog walk.” Slaveholders from ancient Greece to 19th-century America spoke of their human property as livestock, Smith reminds us. George Washington wrote in a letter that both wolves and Indians were “beasts of prey, tho’ they differ in shape.” Nazis described the Jews as germs, rats and leeches, and Stalin’s murderers called kulaks (affluent peasant farmers) snakes and vermin. The Tutsis during Rwanda’s genocide were referred to as cockroaches and rats, and the janjaweed of Sudan called the victims of their massacres dogs, donkeys and monkeys.
From that record, Smith reasonably argues that dehumanization is rooted in human nature, not culture. He offers a rigorous philosophical theory to explain it, informed by his discipline’s precision, and by certain well-founded suppositions about the mind. That makes for an interesting and unusually lucid book about an under-studied subject. It also makes for a theory that doesn’t work.

**Dehumanization** is possible, Smith argues, because of “our cognitive architecture — the evolved design of the human psyche.” Our innate predispositions incline us to divide living things into species, he argues, and, with the same mental equipment, to divide humans into ethnic groups. And just as we do not believe that superficial resemblance means bats and birds belong together, neither do we trust that surface appearances determine who belongs where on the ethnic map. [ETHNOCENTRISM--D]

In other words, in Smith’s account of the research, we are — for better or more often for worse — predisposed to believe that racial or ethnic identity is immutable. That’s because our instincts tell us it is based on an unchanging “essence” at each person’s core, rather than on changeable appearances. Philosophical experiments have shown, for example, that while most people feel sure that a 98-pound weakling can become a strongman, they also intuit that a black person can’t become white, no matter what physical characteristics he changes.

Smith clearly explains why many cognitive scientists believe this tendency is innate and then links it to another predisposition that seems “built in” to the human mind: our inclination to see living things in hierarchies, as in the “great chain of being” of medieval European Christians, with God at its perfect top, human beings above “higher” animals, and so on down to worms and plants. Because we feel that living things are defined by their essence, and because we feel that each creature has its rank in the world, Smith argues, dehumanization comes easily to the human mind: we accept that someone can look human but have a subhuman essence, and we accept that what is not human must be inferior. “When we dehumanize people,” he writes, “we think of them as counterfeit human beings.”

Bringing philosophy to bear on this issue has its benefits, even if philosophy’s methods — the strict definitions of concepts, the search for inconsistencies, the application of logic to language — don’t seem an easy fit with kulak parasites and Tutsi cockroaches. “Although searching for the necessary and sufficient conditions that define everyday concepts is ultimately quixotic,” Smith argues, “it’s still a worthwhile ideal, because the closer we can come to them the more precise and nuanced our understanding will become.”

This is true, but this approach also has a flaw: it assumes people’s thoughts and behaviors are consistent and coherent enough for rigorous analysis. Smith’s ethnic “essences” are those of a philosopher — they’re based on logical definitions (this is human, that is not) and, being eternal
essences, they’re forever. “Subhumanity,” he writes, “is typically thought to be a permanent condition. Subhumans can’t become humans any more than frogs can become princes.”

These requirements leave much of the reality of dehumanization outside Smith’s tent. For example, he writes of the immense guilt of soldiers who have dehumanized their enemy in combat, but then, back in peacetime, recognize their victims as actual people, just like the folks at home. Shrewdly, he notes how military training and rituals aim to undermine this feeling that the enemy is human. But he seems not to recognize that this sort of soldier — who sees his enemy as human, then subhuman, then human again — cannot exist if dehumanization depends on a stable belief in permanent essences.

Similarly, in Smith’s account of slavery, the ancient Romans viewed their slaves as nonhuman frogs that could never turn into human princes. But for centuries, Romans were accustomed to former slaves re-entering society and rising to responsible and even powerful positions.

Then too, because essences must be consistent and well defined, Smith is forced to claim that all dehumanization makes its targets seem, as his title says, “less than human.” But many forms of dehumanization work by making their targets out to be more than human — to be ageless vampires, for instance, or world-spanning conspirators who control the United Nations and the Federal Reserve.

All these troubles arise because Smith’s insistence on immutable essences is only half right: people do categorize themselves and others using essences, but there’s nothing immutable about them. If, like trained philosophers, we could settle for good who is essentially human and who is a zombie vampire squid, we wouldn’t have, or need, this drama of dehumanization, rehumanization, then more dehumanization, and so on. Instead, the who-is-and-isn’t-human question is never truly settled. In fact, it is the dynamic, even mercurial nature of “real human” status that makes this mystery of our psychology so fascinating. What Amenemhet wants us to remember isn’t that he thought Asiatics were dogs, but that he made them act like dogs.

“We don’t humiliate vermin,” Adam Gopnik has observed, “or put them through show trials, or make them watch their fellow-vermin die first.” Right: we do that to people. Because we readily see others as human, we need reminding that our enemies are supposedly different. Which often works, because we also readily see others as not human. Smith has explored the nature of those conceptual boxes “human” and “not human.” But what really needs explaining is the constant, restless travel that the mind makes between them.

David Berreby is the author of “Us and Them: The Science of Identity.” He writes the Mind Matters blog for Big Think.
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/books/review/Berreby-t.html?pagewanted=all

Also see review by Peter Grosvenor in *The Humanist* (Jan.–Feb. 2012)

US PUBLIC'S INDIFFERENCE TO MILLIONS KILLED BECAUSE OF US MILITARISM, IMPERIALISM, AND ILLEGAL, UNNECESSARY WARS

[Every page of Tirman’s history of US demeaning, enslaving, and exterminating others in its wars illustrates Smith’s *Less Than Human*. D]

**The Deaths of Others:** *The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars* by John Tirman

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**Description**

Americans are greatly concerned about the number of our troops killed in battle—100,000 dead in World War I; 300,000 in World War II; 33,000 in the Korean War; 58,000 in Vietnam; 4,500 in Iraq; over 1,000 in Afghanistan—and rightly so. But why are we so indifferent, often oblivious, to the far greater number of casualties suffered by those we fight and those we fight for?

This is the compelling, largely unasked question John Tirman answers in *The Deaths of Others*. Between six and seven million people died in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq alone, the majority of them civilians. And yet Americans devote little attention to these deaths. Other countries, however, do pay attention, and Tirman argues that if we want to understand why there is so much anti-Americanism around the world, the first place to look is how we conduct war. We understandably strive to protect our own troops, but our rules of engagement with the enemy are another matter. From atomic weapons and carpet bombing in World War II to napalm and daisy cutters in Vietnam and beyond, we have used our weapons intentionally to kill large numbers of civilians and terrorize our adversaries into surrender. Americans, however, are mostly ignorant of these facts, believing that American wars are essentially just, necessary, and "good." Tirman investigates the history of casualties caused by American forces in order to explain why America remains so unpopular and why US armed forces operate the way they do.

Trenchant and passionate, *The Deaths of Others* forces readers to consider the tragic consequences of American military action not just for Americans, but especially for those we fight.

**Features**

- Passionate and sweeping account of the impact of U.S. wars on America's opponents
- Tirman's critical account of the American way of war will be very controversial
- Highly readable narrative history that covers all of America's modern wars

**Reviews**
"This sad and gripping record of crimes we dare not face, and the probing analysis of the roots of indifference and denial, tell us all too much about ourselves. It should be read, and pondered." -Noam Chomsky

"John Tirman has not only written a profoundly important, revelatory work about something that most people in this country ignore; he has looked deep into our history and the American mind to see why we ignore it. I wish I could give this highly readable book to everyone, from general to private to the civilian bureaucrats who send them off to kill, who shares the illusion that war mainly involves soldiers." -Adam Hochschild, author of To End All Wars

"The Deaths of Others is an incredibly important venture. I know of no other book that so comprehensively catalogues the victims of U.S. wars . . . Tirman has given us the definitive study of an extremely important but neglected subject. It a must-read for anyone concerned with the lethal impact of U.S. policy on people in all corners of the world." --The Progressive

"Stunning . . . Tirman lays out his strenuously argued case with considerable cogency . . . Tirman renders us great service by providing a fuller picture of the consequences of war and challenging us not to reject data simply because it is not congruent with our favored worldview . . . If Americans today marshal the resolve to enact workable norms ensuring that our use of drones will always discriminate between civilians and legitimate enemy targets, then we will at last be facing up to the crucial moral questions raised in this book."

--America

Product Details


About the Author(s)

John Tirman is Principal Research Scientist and Executive Director of the Center for International Studies, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His books include Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts and 100 Ways America Is Screwing Up the World.

John Tirman, The Deaths of Others

Published by Oxford University Press. Got a very nice review in The Progressive, in their July issue. The legendary Christopher Lydon interviewed me on his radio show. Listen. A long piece in AlterNet on the media’s reaction to civilian casualties. An article in the Boston Globe (August 5). World Streams Radio did a long interview on August 17. More from MIT, including a video interview. A videotaped interview on "The Autograph" hosted by Susan Modaress on Sky Cable is here. Dan Rodgers, who interviewed me on NPR, writes a column for the Baltimore Sun and had an interesting piece on 9/11. Read.

Wrapping up the Iraq war has occasioned a few other opportunities to discuss, such as this in the very worthwhile Canadian International Council site.

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THE END OF THE AFFAIR. The complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in Iraq has occasioned very little insightful comment in the major news media. Obama's speech at Fort Bragg was saccharine and unconvincing. Naturally, he did not mention the "sacrifice" -- involuntary sacrifice -- of the Iraqi people. The news media has also ignored the Iraqis. As usual, only Americans count. Now that we're out, which is to
say, U.S. soldiers and marines are out, the long and bloody affair will be largely forgotten. **One million dead and not a mention of that grisly toll.** That's the American way.

Give Obama some credit for having the chutzpah to depart; he'll take some heat from overheated Republicans, but this was the right thing to do and politically he won't suffer for it. But that's a sideshow. The lack of concern or even acknowledgement about the destruction of Iraq is really breathtaking. It's shameful that Obama can't muster the courage to say a word about this. (Dec. 22)

--Hedges, Chris and Laila Al-Arian. **Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians.** Interview by Amy Goodman.

**Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian on "Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians"

In their new book, journalists Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian bring us the voices of fifty American combat veterans of the Iraq War and their understanding of the US occupation and why Iraqis are so opposed to it.

**Chris Hedges**, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Senior Fellow at the Nation Institute. He was the former Middle East Bureau Chief of the *New York Times*. He is the author of several books, including *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* and *American Fascists*. His latest book is *Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians*.  

**Laila Al-Arian**, Freelance journalist who has written for several publications including *USA Today*, *The Nation* magazine, HuffingtonPost.com, and the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. She is the co-author of *Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians*.

**Rush Transcript**

This transcript is available free of charge. However, donations help us provide closed captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing on our TV broadcast. Thank you for your generous contribution.

**AMY GOODMAN:**

Thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets of Baghdad to protest a proposed deal that would keep US troops in Iraq for years to come. More than five years after the US invasion, the Bush administration is seeking to complete a deal with the Iraqi government that would allow US forces to remain in Iraq past the UN mandate, which expires this July.

Well, a new book by journalists Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian brings us the voices of the fifty American combat vets of the Iraq War and their understanding of the US occupation and why Iraqis are
so opposed to it. The book is called *Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians*.

Last July, I interviewed some of the veterans whose stories appear in this book. Staff Sergeant Timothy John Westphal served in Iraq for one year. He recalled a house raid he led in 2004 on the outskirts of Tikrit.

**STAFF SGT. TIMOTHY JOHN WESTPHAL:** I basically just kicked the clump of people there to wake them up, turned on my flashlight, and all my guys did the same thing. And my light happened to shine right on the face of an old man in his mid-sixties. I found out later he was the patriarch of that family. And as we scanned the cluster of people laying there, we saw two younger military age men, probably in their early twenties. Everybody else — I’d say there were about eight to ten other individuals — were women and children. We come to find out this was just a family. They were sleeping outside.

The terror that I saw on the patriarch’s face, like I said, that really was the turning point for me. I imagined in my mind what he must have been thinking, understanding that he had lived under Saddam’s brutal regime for many years, worried about — you know, hearing stories about Iraqis being carried away in the middle of the night by the Iraqi secret service and so forth, to see all those lights, all those soldiers with guns, all the uniform things that we wear, as far as the helmet, the night vision goggles, very intimidating, very terrifying for the man. He screamed a very guttural cry that I can still hear it every day. You know, it was just the most awful, horrible sound I’ve ever heard in my life. He was so terrified and so afraid for his family. And I thought of my family at that time, and I thought to myself, boy, if I was the patriarch of a family, if soldiers came from another country, came in and did this to my family, I would be an insurgent, too.

**AMY GOODMAN:**

Sergeant Bruhns also served in Baghdad and Abu Ghraib for one year beginning in April of 2003.

**SGT. JOHN BRUHNS:** If you’re on a patrol in a market and somebody opens fire on you and the US military, I mean, if we respond — if we return fire in that direction with overwhelming firepower and, let’s say, a thirteen-year-old girl gets killed, you’re just going to have to assume right then and there that her father and her brother and her uncles — they’re not going to say, you know, Saddam was a bad guy and thank the United States for coming in here and liberating us. They’re going to say, “If the United States never came here, my daughter would still be alive.” And that’s going to cause them to join the resistance. And when they do join the resistance, President Bush says, “They’re al-Qaeda. They’re al-Qaeda.” But they’re not. They’re just regular Iraqi people who feel occupied, and they’re reacting to an occupation.

**AMY GOODMAN:**

I’m joined right now by the two journalists who first spoke to Westphal, Bruhns and forty-eight other Iraq War vets. Their stories are documented in the new book *Collateral Damage: America’s War Against Iraqi Civilians*.

Chris Hedges, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, senior fellow at the Nation Institute, author of a number of books, including *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* and *American Fascists*, he joins us here in New York. Co-author Laila Al-Arian is a freelance journalist who has written for *USA Today*, as well as *The Nation* magazine, huffingtonpost.com and the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, joining us from Washington, D.C.

We welcome you both. Laila Al-Arian, how unpopular, among Iraqis, is the occupation and the war? What are the numbers?

**LAILA AL-ARIAN:** Well, Amy, the numbers are that less than one percent of the Iraqis actually
support a US presence in Iraq, and this has been demonstrated time and time again in polls and also in the result when troops do withdraw from the region. For example, last December, British troops withdrew from Basra, and we saw a calm in the area and a rapid decrease in violence. Some estimates are that it was a 99 percent decrease in violence. So we do see that the results are very clear once troops do withdraw and that there is some stability in this certain region.

AMY GOODMAN:
Chris Hedges, you divide the book *Collateral Damage* into convoys, checkpoints, raids, detentions, then hearts and minds. Explain.

CHRIS HEDGES:
These are the pillars of the occupation, and we wanted to give readers a kind of lens or view into the gritty details of how these mechanisms works, such as convoys. I mean, these are just freight trains of death. You have to remain moving once you leave what they call the wire, once you leave the safe perimeter of a base. And so, these heavily armored convoys will drive at breakneck speeds, fifty, sixty miles an hour down the middle of roads, smashing into Iraqi cars, shoving Iraqi vehicles to the side, running over Iraqi civilians, and then, of course, any time an IED goes off, unleashing withering what they call suppressing fire with belt-fed weapons — these are light machine guns like SAWs, .50-caliber machine guns — into a densely populated areas. And so, I think that rather than sort of do a Studs Terkel kind of memoir, we wanted to focus specifically on sort of key mechanisms that make the occupation work, how these mechanisms function, and the effect that these mechanisms have on Iraqi civilians.

AMY GOODMAN:
For example, Haditha. That was —

CHRIS HEDGES:
Exactly.

AMY GOODMAN:
— this tank going through.

CHRIS HEDGES:
Right.

AMY GOODMAN:
Gets hit.

CHRIS HEDGES:
That’s exactly right.

AMY GOODMAN:
Checkpoints?

CHRIS HEDGES:
Well, checkpoints are deadly for Iraqi civilians, in part because checkpoints are often put up very quickly, so that you can turn a corner in Baghdad, Fallujah or any other city, and there could never have been a checkpoint there, and there suddenly is a checkpoint there. Also, you know, as a kind of security measure, American forces will often put Iraqi forces before their checkpoints. So there’s actually two checkpoints. So you’ll go through the Iraqi forces, and many Iraqi civilians, by the way, are terrified,
because they don’t know who those Iraqis are in the uniform. So sometimes they’ll just try and gun it, which will mean that their cars — American forces or Iraqi forces or both will open fire on their car, or they’ll get through the Iraqi checkpoint not expecting another checkpoint, or it’s night, or their breaks don’t work. And in Iraq, the situation is so volatile and so deadly for the occupation forces that the response is to open fire repeatedly. Checkpoints are a very common form of death for Iraqi civilians, and these, you know, incidents where cars are fired upon and whole families are killed are rarely investigated or documented.

MORE.

http://www.democracynow.org/2008/6/10/chris_hedges_and_laila_al_arian

Reasons to Kill

*Why Americans Choose War* By Richard E. Rubenstein

What makes Americans fight? Why do the professed first citizen of the free world so often accept armed conflict as a political measure, and how do we justify those choices to ourselves? When is war the right decision?

From the American Revolution to the end of World War II, the United States spent nineteen years at war against other nations. But since 1950, the total is twenty-two years and counting. On four occasions, U.S. presidents elected as "peace candidates" have gone on to lead the nation into ferocious armed conflicts. Repeatedly, wars deemed necessary when they began have been seen in retrospect as avoidable — and ill-advised.

Americans profess to be a peace-loving people and one wary of "foreign entanglements." Yet we have been drawn into wars in distant lands from Vietnam to Afghanistan. We cherish our middle-class comforts and our children. Yet we send our troops to Fallujah and Mogadishu. How is it that ordinary Americans with the most to lose are so easily convinced to follow hawkish leaders—of both parties—into war? In *Reasons to Kill* noted scholar Richard E. Rubenstein explores both the rhetoric that sells war to the public and the underlying cultural and social factors that make it so effective. With unmatched historical perspective and insightful commentary, Rubenstein offers citizens new ways to think for themselves about crucial issues of war and peace.

New blog post from Rich.

Advance Praise for *Reasons to Kill*:

“Many of us long for an intelligent and informed conversation about America’s role in the world. Are we going the way of all empires, or is there another way? Richard E. Rubenstein has provided a sane and probing contribution to that conversation. In a time of faux-populism and jingoistic patriotism, it is encouraging to read a critical analysis of our attitude to war and violence from a writer who deeply loves his country.”—*Alan Jones, dean emeritus, Grace Cathedral and author of Soul Making: The Desert Way of Spirituality* and *Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit without Disconnecting your Mind.*

excerpt in Alternet — 5 Ways We Should Radically Reconsider War
5 Ways We Should Radically Reconsider War
Loving your country does not mean following its leaders’ orders no matter what they are.

August 27, 2010

Editor’s note: The following is an excerpt from Richard Rubenstein’s new book, Reasons To Kill: Why Americans Choose War, with the permission of Bloomsbury Press. The book will be available September 2010.

#1 Refuse to Accept the Normality of War

At the end of the nineteenth century, when the United States first became a global power, the arguments for occupying other nations or bringing them under our control featured assertions of moral and racial superiority -- an American version of Kipling’s “white man’s burden.” Later, most justifications for war were based on the need to defend cherished democratic values and institutions against Evil Enemies bent on world conquest. But America’s emergence as the world’s sole superpower has produced an additional rationale for intervention: our alleged right and duty to save a world of failed and failing states from political chaos and terrorism. As one conservative spokesman put it, “Like it or not, we are the sheriff of the world.”

Embraced by many liberals and centrists as well, this “law and order” rationale aims to legitimize the continuous military intervention represented by the War on Terrorism. Accepting it reduces publicity about specific conflicts, accustoms people to tolerate undeclared wars, and redefines “normal” military activity. At the same time, however, the expansion of what Dexter Filkins calls the “forever war” to new theaters generates objections both practical and moral, driving a majority of Americans to demand the early withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and to oppose new military adventures of this sort in places like Yemen and Somalia.

In all this, one senses a growing understanding that the costs of empire far outweigh the benefits. To position the United States as a global sheriff or superhero actually incites further violence rather than deterring it. The technologically advanced superpower has all the weapons one can dream of, but its rebellious subjects even the score by combining fanatical determination with the ability to use simple weapons against overly complex systems. One might call this the imperial superpower’s “Kryptonite problem.” To overcome it requires taking off the hero’s costume and asking two Clark Kent-like questions:

· What about conflict resolution? Those who resort to violence generally do so because of unsolved problems and unfulfilled human needs, not just out of sheer fanaticism, malice, or power-lust. By giving up the struggle to maintain our superpower status -- an addiction all the more powerful for being largely unconscious -- we free ourselves to assist people to identify their problems and work them out in their own way.
What about international or regional law enforcement? If conflict resolution doesn’t work, what the world requires is a legitimate source of coercion -- a lawful authority people can accept regardless of their socioeconomic status, political views, religion, or culture. This means new institutions, especially on the regional level, that can be designed and brought into existence relatively quickly, if only we permit people to organize and act free of our control.

# 2 Think Calmly And Strategically About Self-Defense

Almost a decade after the 9/11 attacks, American thinking on self-defense remains fixated on that great trauma. The consciousness that we were subjected to a totally unexpected, bloody assault, and that members of the same organization that attacked us are still at large, has given us the same mindset that afflicts people who have been in a disastrous and unexpected auto accident. For a while, at least, the driver that ran that stop sign and broadsided us becomes the “typical driver,” and ALL other drivers become sources of fear and loathing.

http://www.alternet.org/vision/147672/5_ways_we_should_radically_reconsider_war
Watch a Video with Richard.

TO END THE KILLING: SHOW THE REALITY

GRAPHIC TRUTH
Friedrich, Ernst. War Against War! 1924. Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987. Friedrich’s photographs and text (in four languages) about WWI combat were intended to inspire opposition to war. He showed “the horrifyingly obvious truth about it” (Vonnegut, who compares him to Goya). “The Beast of War feeds on all alike: children, women, soldiers, earth. Ernst Friedrich’s photographs bear terrible witness to this, and serve to remind us that the red badge of courage is, in reality, a scarlet gaping wound of fear and greed” (Barry Moser, illustrator of The Red Badge of Courage). Friedrich also established the International Anti-War Museum in Berlin in 1924, but the Weimar Government harassed him for his anarchist and pacifist views, and the Nazis closed it, after which he fled Germany. Friedrich spent his life working in the cause of peace and the proletarian revolution.

Greg, Harton. “Can Graphic Images Change the World? Researchers Advance Idea That Gruesome Photos Can Change Behaviors.” NAT (Nov. 15, 2010). Marketing researchers at UofA demonstrated that “highly graphic images of the negative consequences of smoking have the greatest impact on smokers’ intention to quit.” We need a similar book on the Vietnam War, and another on the Iraq and Afghan wars. A book graphically illustrating US wars since WWII would require many volumes! Harton concludes: “Recognizing some of the horrible things that happen on this planet is often the swift kick in the pants that
makes us do something about making the world a better place.” He also mentions abortion, and car accidents. But he does not mention US wars. (Dick)

END NEWSLETTER #2 ON KILLING