

Planting seeds

Note: This is intended as a companion piece to the "Activism" PowerPoint presentation, which teaches a non-violent activism, in the vein of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

WE LIVE IN A WORLD full of dark and extreme ideologies... where hatred and intolerance and violence are often the accepted order of the day. It's a world where severe puritan religious values are seen by many as the only solution to escalating violence... not realizing that these severe ideologies – these "raising of stakes" – are themselves a form of violence that feeds rather than reduces or controls.

In the middle part of the twentieth century, when neither America nor the Soviet Union wanted war, both sides saw a tremendous surge of nuclear weaponry, falsely thinking that such massive overkill would somehow deter their opponent from striking. The idea was a miserable failure that culminated in an event called "The Cuban Missile Crisis," where the world came dangerously close to blowing itself up.

Even after we barely saved the planet from that near-fatal blunder, we didn't seem to learn any lessons, and nuclear arms proliferation continued through the collapse of the Soviet Union, which is why such weapons are now available to terrorists and rogue nations. Our invasion into Iraq, for example, could never have been "justified" had the previous nuclear arms race never happened.

Violence begets violence

On a smaller scale, we see, within our own nation, the highest violence and incarceration rates per capita of any civilized country in the world. And yet, we continue with our own, internal "arms race," where our answer is harsher and more severe intolerance of any behavior outside the mainstream. Bush's "Patriot Act" has further raised the stakes by allowing surveillance of citizens and removing our constitutional guarantee of due process. Citizens are arrested for attempting to "smuggle" fingernail clippers aboard an airplane, and the dialogue against the GLBT community is harsher than at any point in human history.

Religious Extremism begets Violence

Americans have created a unique form of Christianity... where Christ is attributed with many sentiments not found in scripture. We are the only country in the world, for example, where religious leaders lead the fight for our "right to bear arms."

Americans are, in general, afraid of violence, yet they are foolish to believe that their own escalating violent "prevention" will make them safer.

Activism

For me, “activism” means I’m actively involved with changing a belief system. It’s a belief system that has been around a long time, and in many ways is uniquely American. I’m fighting the belief system that says we must be violent to be safe.

Belief Systems

I think a “belief system” looks exactly like a tree. It starts with a basic idea, which is the seed. Then it grows based on how much thought you put into it, and how much support you get from other people and from information you feed it with.

Belief systems grown out of fear will almost always be violent, and belief systems grown out of love will almost always be peaceful.

For example, let’s say you start with a seed of fear. Let’s say you’re sitting in church one day, and your preacher announces that your family is “under attack by the gay agenda,” and that this attack poses a real threat to your children.

People don't change their opinions in front of you and never when you press the point - but only privately and secretly after you've left the room - when they have a chance to think about it with no pressure. When it comes to ideas, people don't accept full-grown trees, but only gently planted seeds. The trees we all have to grow for ourselves.

-- Troy Carlyle