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From the perspective of wholeness, from our deepest human center, we are moved to tears by the murder of innocent civilians, the millions killed by American FREEDOM-FIGHTER/terrorist activities rationalized in the name of God and the thousands of our own killed by TERRORIST/freedom-fighter activities rationalized in the name of Allah. From our true or fully human center we mourn all the victims equally and in principle condemn both activities equally for further expanding the futile cycle of revenge at the expense of peace and justice.

No strategy based on "the end justifies the means" can ever lead to real peace because, as Gandhi noted: "means and ends are like seed and tree respectively." Modern versions of ancient Rome's bread and circuses, now provided by the media, have distracted us from a host of unpleasant realities such as the consequences of our constant threat of, and frequent use of, violence as a "diplomatic" tool. The immense effort and resources devoted to killing (mostly unarmed civilians since WWI) for "peace and democracy" have not brought peace but its opposite; a growing threat from nuclear weapons and the spread of war and terrorism all over the globe. In the process, democratic movements have been crippled or replaced with dictatorships and, the draconian measures employed in the name of preserving freedom, have served instead to diminish freedom around the world.

Now, a contested election saddles us with an administration of fundamentalist, right wing ideologues and "cold warriors", bent on expanding the futile policy of killing for peace. Our violent military response to Sep. 11th is not in accord with our fully human potential of love and justice for all -- including the "enemy". By invoking God, Allah, etc., as justification for such a primitive response, we reduce the divine to a subhuman or childish caricature. It should be common knowledge that by unconsciously projecting our dark side onto the "other" WE CREATE an enemy in our own likeness. The similarities between Bush and Bin Laden, their rhetoric and choice of violent actions is telling. Here we have two spoiled rich kids, both scions of oil barons, neither one democratically elected as representing a majority. Both have declared holy war (crusade/jihad) and both attribute all evil and all consequences of their own violent means to the other and so on. But from our perspective there is at least one important difference.

Illegitimate claim to power notwithstanding, the Bush fundamentalists and militarists are pursuing unjust and violent means in OUR name. Our silence will be construed as consent for the taking of more innocent lives, perhaps MILLIONS from starvation in Afghanistan alone. Will we continue waving flags and feeling as good about that as a TERRORIST/freedom-fighter might be expected to? Will we allow similar statements to that of Madeleine Albright's (re: the deaths of half a million children in Iraq - the "price is worth it.") to go uncontested in yet another country? Have "we the people" become as callous as our "leaders"?

Silence IS consent! Therefore, people of conscience must speak out while we still have some freedom of speech left. This catastrophe can be redeemed by going beyond our primitive/childish emotions centered on revenge and seeing it as a wake up call. WAKE UP CALL! Our

nation's addiction to oil, extravagant waste, consumption, exploitation, enslavement for short term profit and so on, leads inexorably to expedient violence for a quick fix. We need a national, "12 Step" recovery plan to help wean us from these and other life/world threatening addictions. The following steps selected from the twelve would be especially valuable in the present crisis.

The first step: admit things are out of control. The escalating violence perpetrated with US military and economic might has pushed the entire world toward the brink of destruction. But we the addicted, true to form, deny reality and re-define this rush to the precipice as the way to peace and progress. Such are the delusions of addiction. In reality, the relationship between means and ends clearly indicates: "there is no way to peace, peace IS the way".

Our false-self must yield to the Source of power for love, healing and transformation, tapped by all the great peacemakers throughout history. Completing this transcendent movement and process leads us to a new center of wholeness. In turn, our true-self center, in at-one-ment with the Source makes available the wherewithal to be true peacemakers. According to the distinguished religious scholar Huston Smith, the "big jihad" of mainstream Islam is the inner battle to liberate one's true-self center from its eclipse by denial and delusions. With the inner battle won, people become part of "A Force More Powerful" as Jack DuVall titles his documentary film cataloging the astounding achievements of non-violent actions throughout the 20th century.

Another step, critical for dispelling myriad delusions, is radical truth telling. As a veteran of the Vietnam war, I'm fully aware of the maxim: "the first casualty of war is truth." We have been at war for a very long time and the lies have grown exponentially. Who are we kidding with our self-righteous indignation over 9/11? Mainly ourselves. It's neither surprising nor difficult to imagine why the US government is hated around the world and by growing numbers of its own citizens when we consider the following:

In my short lifetime, US military and secret police activities have killed thousands of innocent civilians in South America, hundreds of thousands in Central America, millions in Asia and elsewhere. The list is long and unacceptable to people of conscience everywhere. Also unacceptable is the long list of US assisted assassinations of popular leaders and the installment of brutal dictators in country after country who later turn against the US and its citizens as well.

Not surprisingly the US voting record at the UN often aligns with the States we list as terrorist as it does in opposing the establishment of the International Criminal Court. If such a court of justice were already established (A), many of our "leaders" (past and present) and (B), the many terrorist thugs aided, abetted, funded or installed by our secret police and military would be facing charges for crimes against humanity. Examples of (A) -- those who planned it and those who carried out the orders to destroy the civilian infrastructure in Iraq, including the water supply system, are by definition guilty of crimes against humanity. Speaking of crimes, the emerging evidence against our so-called statesman Henry Kissinger makes many CONVICTED terrorists look benign by comparison. Examples of (B) -- our "leaders" and the media consider it politically incorrect to dwell on Saudi Arabia's funding and promotion of terrorism because they are the folks who provide us with a cheap oil fix. An addict will sell their soul for a fix. The (B)

list of thugs also includes Saddam Hussein, Noriega, Ariel Sharon, Osama Bin Laden, and so on and on. From a global perspective, our bloated US military, economic and ecological footprints are unacceptably destructive.

And present US military policy is nothing short of shameful. The US military promotes the cowardly killing of innocent civilians from afar, from positions of safety and air-conditioned comfort, in order to avoid risk to our highly trained and heavily armed combatants outfitted with the latest in high tech safety equipment. In stark contrast, Afghany women and children must bravely face, unarmed, unprotected, the fiery force that hundreds of millions of tax payer dollars, in the service of revenge, can unleash on a country made poor in large measure by previous US military intervention. For 17 centuries, since the time of St. Augustine, that has been the definition of UN-just warfare.

While our economic policies dominate much of the world, over 10 million children died of poverty related causes in 1998 alone. But we needn't look beyond our own borders for signs of abject poverty and societal decay, the fertile soil for home grown fundamentalist violence. Take a ride on our dilapidated train system and you can witness abject poverty from coast to coast. Tour the ghetto war zones in every major city. Talk to some of the 80,000 homeless in Chicago alone and see the horrifying results of the lack of adequate healthcare, housing, schooling, family planning, protection from extreme violence, welfare for the most needy, access to legal justice, access to corporate media to expose the plight of the children and the daily murder of unarmed civilians, and so on.

On the other hand, the poorest among us DO have access to toxic waste sites (the majority of ghetto poor live within a mile of a site listed as toxic), public water supplies minus the expensive, individually installed filtration systems, to death row (the US government, in alignment with terrorist States, supports capital punishment) without adequate consul, to daily police harassment and threat of arrest, to slave wages in a growing prison system designated by Amnesty International as torturous and so on.

The list could be greatly expanded but to face just these facts and their consequences fully can lead us to the difficult step of forgiveness toward those who have injured us and, more difficult still, asking those we have injured for forgiveness. True forgiveness in turn leads toward reconciliation and a strong desire for radical change and repair of the damage done.

Wisdom traditions since time immemorial have stressed that the measure of a civilization can be gauged by its treatment of the most vulnerable of its members. We get low marks in civilized behavior because it's not our priority. Like the Roman empire in St. Paul's day we excel primarily in military and economic might and, if "star wars" and WTO prevail, global dominance. This nation's substitute for God, "the invisible hand of the market", is giving the finger to the poor and to the world's children as it gives the finger to the global environment which supports all life on the planet. Paul (in his Letter to the Romans) pointed out a list of injustices similar to the above and predicted the empire would fall in spite of its might. The lesson from history is: "nothing seems more permanent than a long standing government about to lose power...nothing more invincible than a grand army on the morning of its annihilation."