

## Moving from a Culture of War to a Culture of Peace

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Dr. David Adams, one of the founders of the UNESCO Culture of Peace movement, wrote *The History of the Culture of War* in which he lists 15 characteristics of a culture of war. He uses this list not to spell doom and gloom but to suggest ways that we can use it as a starting point toward a culture of peace. Old habits die hard and war has been with us since the beginning of time. However, that is no reason for it to continue. Slavery also traces its roots to early human history but now it is illegal throughout the world. Even though some of it still exists, it is nothing in scope to when it was accepted. Slavery is also under scrutiny wherever it does occur and its perpetrators are arrested and jailed. This should also be the fate of war. When the word "abolition" was used in the past, everyone knew it related to slavery. Now it has a new meaning – the abolition of war - and those of us in this movement expect to meet the same opposition as those who went against slavery earlier in our history.

The first characteristic is armies and armaments. This provides the reason and capacity for war. Their very existence triggers wars. Sometimes wars are started just to test new weapons systems. Weapons provide a sense of bravado that would not exist without them. For example, look at the militaries of peaceful nations. Not posing a threat is peaceful in itself. The second is neocolonialism whereby stronger states exploit weaker ones and drain them of their resources using the rationale of "national interests." The third is the internal culture of war and economies based on exploitation of workers and destruction of the environment (free trade is a good example). The fourth is prisons and the penal systems. Since the U.S. puts more of its citizens in jail than any other industrialized country in the world, we meet this qualification well. The fifth is the military-industrial complex. Eisenhower warned us about this, and his worst nightmare is occurring. The tail is wagging the dog. The sixth is the drugs-for-guns trade as in the Iran-Contra Scandal of the Reagan era. Drugs still provide the funding for world-wide weapons sales. The seventh is authoritarian rule associated with military leadership. It is interesting that the most vitriolic letters to the editor were in response to my column on authoritarianism. It is as if I held out a mirror to all the authoritarians who didn't like what they saw. The eighth is control of information through secrecy and propaganda. People in the U.S. were reluctant to enter WW I until the Creel Commission started a propaganda campaign. Now, powerful agencies like the CIA control information. There is even a black budget that is kept secret. One has only to witness Colin Powell's false testimony on Iraq to see how easy it is to launch a bogus war. The Northwoods report and the Tonkin Gulf Resolution are other examples. Someone once said that if you lie, you should tell a big one because those are more likely to be believed. The ninth is the identification of an "enemy." We tend to let others in authority define our enemies for us. This occurs through dehumanization as in the terms "gooks", "sand niggers", "towel heads", "commies" and the like. The tenth is education for a culture of war. Sanitized textbooks, coercive pledges of allegiance that undermine the role of conscience, JROTC programs, and the emphasis on wars and war heroes dominate education not to mention the absence of critical thinking. The eleventh is male domination. It is interesting to note that rape is a tool of war and that it is more about power than sex. One boot camp chant I remember was "Two four six eight, rape,

kill, mutilate". The twelfth is religious institutions that support the government and military. Witness chaplains wearing camouflage and churches with American flags inside or outside of them. In places like Iran and Afghanistan, clerics are huge war supporters. The Thirteenth is artistic and literary glorification of military conquest. This ranges from Barry's Sadler's *Ballad of the Green Beret* to countless books and movies that portray war in a positive light. The Fourteenth is nationalism that places one's country above all others and justifies all kinds of horrible means to achieve questionable ends like killing and torturing for peace. The final characteristic is racism that is both institutional and attitudinal. From racial profiling to disproportionality of minorities in special education and in prisons, racism is very evident in the U.S. Much of the criticism of Obama appears to be based on racism. Hate groups are numerous in the U.S. and are increasing.

Adams and his colleagues created eight culture of peace action areas that will help move the world toward a culture of peace. They are as follows:

1. Fostering a culture of peace through education (conflict resolution, peace education, dialogue and nonviolence training)
2. Promoting sustainable economic and social development (eradicating poverty, meeting the needs of women and children, reducing economic and social inequalities)
3. Promoting respect for all human rights (abiding by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
4. Ensuring equality between men and women (including more women in power sharing, keeping women safe)
5. Fostering democratic participation (campaign finance reform would allow less affluent people to run for office; schools need to be more democratic)
6. Advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity (promoting dialogue among civilizations, showing respect and appreciation for differences, and making refugees, displaced persons, indigenous people and migrants feel welcome and accepted so they will feel connected to the dominant culture)
7. Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge (support of independent media, measures to control the amount of violence in the media)
8. Promoting international peace and security (complete disarmament, involving women in peacemaking efforts, balancing peace keeping with peacemaking, making greater use of the International Criminal Court)

The U.S., being the wealthiest and most powerful country in world, is in a unique position to lead the world toward a culture of peace. It has the ability to set the example for other countries to follow. If we continue to be a culture of war, it could be our undoing because too much is sacrificed to maintain such a culture. The U.S. has the ingenuity and creativity to accomplish this. So far, all we lack is the will.