

Peace as Patriotism

Shannon Bogue

University High School

Parents: Ross and Carol Bogue

She stared in horror at the blood seeping out of the bullet hole in the guy's chest as he collapsed onto the stone floor. The killers backed away with a short "nothing personal", and the girl listened to the careless comment of the group watching the film with her.

"That blood is so fake."

What kind of place is it where 79% of the population agrees that watching TV causes an increase in violence and yet the average family owns 2.3 television sets? Where is it that the same blood-filled video games that are used to train soldiers are highly sought after by the common civilian? How can a country seek to create peace and democracy in other countries without healing itself, first? And what city could be so proud of their soldiers that they nearly ignore the people who are working so hard to keep the soldiers from being needed?

We, the people of the United States, in general, believe that watching violent TV precipitates violence. The average American youth spends 900 hours in school every year and 1500 hours watching TV. 53.8% of the shows on television are about crime, disaster, and war. American children grow up in an environment that not only accepts violence as normal, but is entertained by it. Countless videos that encourage slapstick humor - humor where the things considered funny are the people who hit each other, who get hurt. There are commercials that encourage children to join the army by calling the soldiers heroes. There are videos whose purpose is to show a foreign person being introduced to American culture in order for Americans to laugh.

But who has ever heard of a city that encourages the peacemakers? During the Vietnamese War, countless Americans protested against the draft and the war. People were thrown into prison for raising their voices. After the attacks on the World Trade Centers, almost every American flew an American flag. Those who didn't were considered unpatriotic. The

people cried out for vengeance, and now, eight years later, how much further have we gotten on this mission to end terrorism? Now the cry is divided between "bring them home" and "support our troops". While it is true that 4,340 US soldiers have died in this conflict, a minimum of 50,000 Iraqi civilians have died and several million are refugees. There are 150,000 people in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. Take two people that you know in Bloomington-Normal plus yourself. Now imagine one of them dying, killed by a foreign soldier attempting to promote peace and democracy. Look at your house, your possessions. What would you take with you when the troops came? What would change if you knew that you were never coming back? That is what war means. It means that towns like Danvers, Illinois are destroyed fifty time over. It means that families like yours are forced to leave their homes. Why then is it so hard to find someone willing to pursue peace?

That blood which is "so fake" has become a statistic that people in Bloomington-Normal are almost immune to. Bloomington-Normal has at least two public memorials for the troops that died in foreign wars. History classes teach about war and politics. Somehow the people who try to promote peace are left out of the picture. The Anabaptist movement and their many fights receive an entire column of text in a history book, but Menno Simons receives the last sentence of the page. The reverse should be true.

The role of war and war heroes in the American society needs to be changed. In a typical American family, the parents spend 3.5 minutes every week talking to their child. Parents need to communicate more with their children and encourage them to pursue peaceful activities. A public memorial should be built for those people who have died in their attempt to prevent violence, a memorial for the Menno Simons of the area. Schools need to teach students about the peacemakers, not just the different wars that happened throughout history, as well as

implement a not-so-new method of conflict resolution that my mother taught me. Teachers and principals need to resolve conflicts, not just through lectures, detentions and suspensions, but also through these steps:

- Look the other person in the eye and say his/her name
- State the problem
- Tell the person how you feel
- Tell the person what you need in order for the conflict to be resolved
- Listen to the other person's response and agree on a solution

Through peaceful conflict resolution, the students learn to be active peacemakers who grow up, move away, and teach their children to be peacemakers. By becoming a city that actively promotes conflict resolution and honoring the peacemakers, Bloomington-Normal will become a turning point in history. We will become the people who begin the end of wars and senseless violence. We begin the creation of a utopia similar to Dinotopia (Third code of Dinotopia – a weapon is an enemy, even to its owner). We will live out the words of Christ in Matthew 5:38-40 "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." And hopefully, we will end the popularity of movies that reduce our compassion and our opinion of murders to a single sentence.

“That blood is so fake.”

Works Consulted:

Video Games and Agressive Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior in the Laboratory and in Life 78.4

(200): 772-90. *Journal of Perssonality and Social Psychology*. Web. 1 Oct. 2009.

<<http://www.apa.org/journals/features/psp784772.pdf>>.

"Bloomington-Normal, IL Population by Decades." *Real Estate Center*. N.p., 1 Oct. 2009. Web.

1 Oct. 2009. <<http://recenter.tamu.edu/data/popmd/pm1040.htm>>.

Finney, Dee. "Dinotopia - Codes, Rules, and Regulations." *Great Dreams*. N.p., 20 May 2002.

Web. 1 Oct. 2009. <http://www.greatdreams.com/rules_regs.htm>.

Herr, Norman, prod. "Television and Health." *Internet Resources to Accompany the Sourcebook for Teaching Science*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Oct. 2009.

<<http://www.csun.edu/science/health/docs/tv&health.html>>.

The New Adventure Bible. N.p.: The Zondervan Corporation, 1994. Print. New International Version.

White, Deborah. "Iraq War Fact, Results, Statistics." *About.com: US Liberal Politics*.

About.com, 1 Sept. 2009. Web. 1 Oct. 2009.

<<http://usliberals.about.com/od/homelandsecurit1/a/IraqNumbers.htm>>.