

## **Ten Years After September 11th, 2001**

### **A Soldier's Roadmap to a Peaceful Future**

**By**

**Leslee Goodman**

*Paul K. Chappell was born in 1980 and raised in Alabama, the son of a half-black and half-white father and his Korean bride. Paul's father was a soldier in the Korean and Vietnam wars, joining the Army while it was still segregated. He returned from battle a deeply troubled and violent man. Despite this legacy, Paul chose to pursue a military career and was accepted to West Point. A member of West Point's bicentennial class of 2002, the terrorist attacks occurred during his senior year. He was in a class on national security on the morning of Sept. 11, when another professor walked into the room, told Paul's professor to turn on the television, and together in silence Paul and his classmates watched the second plane hit and the towers collapse.*

*Although West Point is less than an hour from New York City, classes went on as usual, but Paul says, "The atmosphere was changed. We knew we would be going to war."*

*During the next several years, Paul saw his friends and comrades deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq, as the United States struggled to fight an expanding war on terrorism. To protect its citizens from the threats it perceived, the U.S. government relied upon a foreign policy of military might. Paul himself served a tour of duty in Iraq, but slowly his beliefs about the strategy his country was pursuing began to change. In 2008, while still an active duty officer, his first published book was released - Will War Ever End? A Soldier's Vision of Peace for the 21st Century. Two years later came his second published book, The End of War: How Waging Peace Can Save Humanity, Our Planet, and Our Future. Both books have won acclaim from luminaries such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and awards including Peacemaker of the Year from the Independent Publisher Book Awards.*

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#### ***What do you think of our response to the attacks on 9/11?***

From a strategic, economic, and security perspective, our response to the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> has created many more problems than it has solved. For example,

invading the Greater Middle East violated the most basic principles of military strategy. According to Sun Tzu, who wrote *The Art of War*, one of the worst things a leader can do in war is become angry. Sun Tzu knew that when people are enraged, they cannot think clearly and will make self-destructive decisions. This is why one of the best things a leader can do in war is make his opponent angry, because when leaders – whether military or civilian – become angry they lose concern for consequences, and they become reckless and careless. An angry and reckless opponent is much easier to lure into a trap than a calm and rational opponent.

We must keep in mind that by invading the Greater Middle East, we fell right into Osama bin Laden's trap. He wanted to make us so angry that we would make a catastrophic strategic error, and the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> generated so much rage that it prevented many people from thinking clearly. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, I have a difficult time imagining any American saying, "Let's do exactly what Osama bin Laden wants us to do." Yet by invading Afghanistan and Iraq, we did exactly what he wanted us to do. We fell right into his trap.

Abdul Bari Atawan, a Western journalist who interviewed Osama bin Laden in 1996, said: "It seems Osama bin Laden had a long-term strategy. He told me personally that he can't go and fight the Americans and their country. But if he manages to provoke them and bring them to the Middle East and to their Muslim worlds, where he can find them or fight them on his own turf, he will actually teach them a lesson... He told me, again, that [while President Clinton was in office] he expected the Americans to send troops to Somalia and he sent his people to that country to wait for them in order to fight them. They managed actually to shoot down an American helicopter where 19 soldiers were killed and regretted that the Clinton Administration decided to pull out their troops from Somalia and run away. He was so saddened by this. He thought they would stay there so he could fight them there. But for his bad luck, according to his definition, they left, and he was planning another provocation in order to drag them to Muslim soil."

### ***But why did Osama bin Laden want us to invade the Middle East?***

Prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the U.S. invasion of two Muslim countries – Afghanistan and Iraq – many people in the Middle East thought Osama bin Laden was crazy. But he knew that if we invaded the Middle East and committed ourselves to a long-term war, he could mobilize many people in the region against us and increase recruitment for terrorism. Imagine if a foreign army invaded the U.S. tomorrow. Americans would go berserk, because most people don't like armed foreign soldiers on their land. Osama bin Laden knew that if we invaded a Muslim country, people could be mobilized to fight what would be perceived as a foreign occupation. And just look at the results. Because of our military presence in the Middle East, Osama bin Laden went from being a terrorist that many people had never heard of to one of the most famous people in the world with a growing number of sympathizers and supporters. Now Osama bin Laden is seen by many marginalized Muslims as a martyr who died for his cause, and the amount of Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda imitators, Al Qaeda sympathizers, and insurgents throughout the Middle East and Africa who want to kill Americans is significantly higher today than it was ten years ago.

Another important lesson from basic military strategy is that it is extremely dangerous to underestimate your opponent. When people said, “If Osama bin Laden wants a fight, let’s give it to him!” they not only underestimated Osama bin Laden but the dangerous situation our country was in after September 11<sup>th</sup>. Of all the negative things we could say about Osama bin Laden – his cruelty, lack of compassion, fanaticism – one thing we could not say is that he was stupid. After all, he had a track record of beating superpowers in the Greater Middle East. He helped beat the Soviets in Afghanistan, and he knew we lost in Vietnam. The Vietnam War was a situation where we won every battle but lost the war.

Osama bin Laden could never have won a decisive battle against us, but he could defeat us in Afghanistan the same way he beat the Soviets, by bankrupting our country. In a November 2004 videotape, Osama bin Laden said, “All that we have to do is to send two Mujahedin to the farthest point East to raise a piece of cloth on which is written Al Qaeda in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses without their achieving for it anything of note other than some benefits to their private companies... we alongside the Mujahedin bled Russia for 10 years until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat... So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy... Al Qaeda spent \$500,000 on the event [September 11th attacks], while America in the incident and its aftermath lost – according to the lowest estimates – more than 500 billion dollars, meaning that every dollar of Al Qaeda defeated a million dollars [of America]. As for the size of the economic deficit, it has reached record, astronomical numbers estimated to total more than a trillion dollars. And even more dangerous and bitter for America is that the Mujahedin recently forced Bush to resort to emergency funds to continue the fight in Afghanistan and Iraq which is evidence of the success of the bleed-until-bankruptcy plan...”

In 2004 when he made these statements, many Americans probably couldn’t imagine our country going bankrupt. But when we look at how our economy and society in 2011 are being strangled by the debt crisis, high level of unemployment, big budget cuts, and ongoing recession, we realize that Osama bin Laden’s plan to damage our economy by increasing our war spending beyond what we can afford is working.

Of all the talk about the soaring national debt and growing economic crisis, few people are discussing the trillions of dollars we are spending on war, which could be better used to help the American people. How much longer can we afford to have a large military and contractor presence in Afghanistan and Iraq? Instead of being defeated in a decisive battle, we are slowly being bled to death economically. The tenth anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> is upon us, and compare our economy ten years ago to what it is today. Our economy today is in terrible shape due to many factors, but one major factor rarely being discussed is vast war spending. In his *Cross of Iron Speech*, General Dwight Eisenhower said that over a long period of time a war economy is equivalent to crucifixion, because it slowly bleeds a country’s economy, resources, and wellbeing to death.

Of course, the Soviet Union collapsed due to many reasons, but in front of the 27<sup>th</sup> congress of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party in February 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev referred to the war in Afghanistan as “our bleeding wound.” The war in Afghanistan accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union by wasting large amounts of money the

Soviets desperately needed, and the war also used up a great deal of time, energy, resources, and brainpower that the Soviets could have invested toward solving their other problems.

I – along with many Americans – would understand the need for a high military budget if it were actually making us and the rest of the world safer, but it is actually doing the opposite. It is threatening our security along with our economy, and it is causing us to become more entangled in Osama bin Laden’s trap. But during this critical time in American history we have an amazing opportunity to implement a new and more effective security strategy that would not only reduce the military budget, but would also better support our troops and truly promote peace and freedom around the world. Osama bin Laden wanted us to stay in Afghanistan until our government ran out of money and the American people suffered enormous economic hardship, but instead of allowing such a catastrophe to happen, this new and more effective security strategy is something that I don’t think Osama bin Laden ever expected us to do.

When Osama bin Laden was killed recently, we must keep in mind that although he did not want to die, he preferred being killed to being captured. He would much rather have been a martyr who died in a blaze of glory than a prisoner in a tiny cell. So by killing him instead of capturing him, we gave him what he wanted yet again. I am against doing what Osama bin Laden wanted us to do. I am against letting his strategy bankrupt and destroy our economy. I am against falling into cleverly-laid traps that endanger the security and wellbeing of our country. I think we certainly have to fight terrorism, but there is a more effective way to combat terrorism that is not only better for our economy, but better for American and global security, along with peace and freedom around the world.

***What is this new and more effective security strategy, and what should our response to terrorism have been?***

West Point gave me an excellent education, but one thing I wish West Point would have taught me – which is crucial information that every American citizen who cares about his or her country should know – is that if we want to truly understand how to protect America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must realize how the hypocrisy of American politicians is undermining both American and global security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Eisenhower, the first president to identify Middle Eastern unrest as a threat to the United States, realized that the reason many people in the Middle East hate us is because we suppress freedom there. We support dictatorships. We prevent democratic progress, which is the opposite of what we say we’re doing.

America has some of the most incredible ideals in the world, such as freedom, democracy, justice, and opportunity. But the world for the most part isn’t angry at our ideals. The world for the most part is angry that we don’t live up to our ideals. When Wael Ghonim, who helped lead the peaceful protests in Egypt, was asked in a *60 Minutes* interview how he felt when President Obama spoke in support of the peaceful protestors in Egypt who were challenging their dictator, Ghonim replied, “It was good that he [President Obama] supports the revolution. That’s a good stand, but we don’t really need him. I wrote a Tweet. I wrote ‘Dear western governments, you have been supporting the

regime that was oppressing us for 30 years. Please don't get involved now. We don't need you."

After the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, American politicians said, "They hate us because we're free," but during the past year people all over the Middle East have been protesting because they want their freedom. Protests have been occurring throughout the Middle East against dictatorships we support, such as those in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Tunisia, and other dictatorships that are not closely allied with us. The bottom line is that many people in the Middle East are fed up with living under oppression and tyranny, just as our Founding Fathers were fed up, Susan B. Anthony and the many women in the women's rights movement were fed up, and Martin Luther King, Jr. and the many African Americans in the civil rights movement were fed up. It is a myth that the majority of people in the Middle East are a bunch of freedom-hating terrorists who want to kill us because they hate our way of life.

We have actually been supporting dictatorships in the Middle East for decades, such as the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein, and the government in Pakistan. Our politicians preach about freedom, democracy, and liberty, while they support dictatorships. They talk about the importance of liberating the oppressed women in Afghanistan, while they are closely allied with the Saudi Arabian government – which is as oppressive toward women as the Taliban. This makes us look like hypocrites, and it causes people in the Middle East to question our true intentions. Are we really in Iraq to support democracy, or are we more concerned with oil?

Politicians are often stereotyped as being dishonest, deceptive, two-faced, and self-serving. Of course, there are honest politicians who work hard to maintain their integrity, but deception is a large part of the political game, and we all know it. So I think it is odd when Americans – who have no problem seeing politicians as dishonest, deceptive, two-faced, and self-serving – are surprised when their government lies to them. Who do they think is running our government? Politicians. Is it any surprise that our government lies to us?

One of the most undemocratic things I have ever heard – which I hear often – is that the American President is the leader of the free world. If we understand what the ideal of democracy truly means, we realize that the people are supposed to lead, and the president is supposed to be the administrator of the people's will. Although we live in a representative democracy instead of a direct democracy, we still have methods to pressure our politicians to do what we want. Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many other patriotic Americans have applied this pressure in order to create positive change. There are many politicians who mean well and want to do the right thing, and the American people can use their power as citizens to pressure the political system into creating positive change.

So several of the key components in a new and more effective strategy for fighting terrorism are to use our power as American citizens to stop the hypocrisy of our politicians and end the injustice of our foreign policy; and to prioritize American democratic ideals such as liberty and justice above the desires of the privileged few who profit from war at the expense of the many, which Smedley Butler – a Marine General who was twice awarded the Medal of Honor – explained in his book *War is a Racket*.

Another component in a new and more effective American security strategy is to wage peace instead of waging war. The purpose of the American military is to protect the

American people, and one of the best ways to protect the American people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to help people around the world. The cover of the July 2011 issue of “Military Officer” magazine featured an article titled “Waging Peace: America’s fighting forces are working to build peace and stability through assistance and relief.” According to the article, in 2009 U.S. military units conducted 154 humanitarian projects in 61 countries. These efforts focused on medical, dental, and veterinary needs as well as construction projects. Imagine if around the world the U.S. had the following reputation – when a humanitarian crisis or natural disaster happens the Americans come, help, and *leave*. This would not only help us win hearts and minds around the world, but it would combat the poverty and hopelessness that provide fertile soil for terrorism to grow.

Having hundreds of military bases around the world – as we do now – is not only economically unsustainable, but it makes people question our intentions and become suspicious when we provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief. They wonder if we are really there to help them or if our true intentions are to put a military base in their country. To understand why having military bases all over the world endangers American security, we must remember that we supported Osama bin Laden during the 1980s, but he turned against us when we put military bases in Saudi Arabia – where Islamic holy land is located. How would Americans feel if a foreign country put a military base on our soil? How would we react? As I mentioned earlier, we would go berserk. Brian Fishman, who teaches at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, said in an interview on *Bill Moyers Journal*, “It’s not good enough to leave 20 or 30 thousand troops in Iraq... those 20 or 30 thousand Americans are going to remain a sticking point and a propaganda tool for Al Qaeda around the world.”

In addition to stopping the hypocrisy of our politicians, ending the injustice of our foreign policy, and having the U.S. military wage peace instead of waging war, we must understand that Al Qaeda has more in common with a criminal enterprise like the Mafia than with a monolithic government like the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. Al Qaeda is a transnational criminal network, and you cannot defeat a transnational criminal network by invading and occupying a country. September 11<sup>th</sup> was planned from Hamburg, Germany, and a person can plan a terrorist attack from San Francisco. A person can plan a terrorist attack from a Western country and even the United States, and waging war in a Muslim country to combat terrorism creates a high number of civilian casualties that exacerbates terrorism.

For example, in a *60 Minutes* interview, Marine lieutenant colonel Christian Cabaniss said that if you kill a thousand Taliban and two civilians, it’s a loss. It turns the local population against you, and this is why the U.S. military is trying to minimize civilian casualties. But since World War II, the majority of people killed in war have been civilians. In some conflicts, up to 90% of the people killed have been civilians, and no matter how hard we try to not kill civilians in war, many civilians will die. This is due to the chaotic and confusing nature of war, along with human fallibility and the fallibility of technology.

The organizations that are best trained to combat criminal networks are the FBI and police. The FBI helped stop terrorists such as Ted Kaczynski and Timothy McVeigh, and serial killers such as Jeffrey Dahmer and John Wayne Gacy. In the past, international police work has been used to arrest wanted criminals on foreign soil such as the Nazis who escaped from Germany following World War II. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the whole

world's sympathy went out to us, and we had an opportunity to treat the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> as a horrible criminal act and work with other countries to go after Al Qaeda the way we went after Timothy McVeigh, the Nazis who fled from Germany after World War II, and other criminals.

***Will the military be able to adapt to a changing world?***

Anyone who thinks the military isn't capable of adapting its tactics and methods in order to meet the challenges of a new era should remember that militaries around the world used to fight with swords and ride horses into battle, but they adapted as technology and the world changed. During World War I, trench warfare was the norm, but again the military adapted and fought much differently during World War II. Today, the military is already adapting and evolving in ways many people don't realize. For example, due to the urban terrain where modern wars are often fought, many U.S. Special Forces soldiers spend more time fighting like a sophisticated SWAT team than the soldiers who invaded the beaches of Normandy or the soldiers who went on long patrols in the jungles of Vietnam. Today the U.S. military has adopted tactics used by law enforcement officers and humanitarian aid organizations, and I think this trend will continue in the coming years because this is how we must adapt in order to confront the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The U.S. military is the only organization in the world that can deploy tens of thousands of physically fit, mentally tough, well trained people to any spot on the globe in a matter of days. Shifting its mission further in the direction of humanitarian aid and disaster relief would not only better protect America by winning hearts and minds around the world, it would also greatly reduce the military budget which can in turn be used to help the American people, because much of the military budget is spent on a vast array of high tech weapons that are becoming more and more obsolete in our modern conflicts. It will also give many soldiers what they truly want. Military recruitment ads appeal largely to young people's idealism, yearning for self-improvement, and desire to do good around the world. The new navy motto is "a global force for good," and have you ever seen a military recruitment commercial that makes any reference to killing? As General Douglas MacArthur reminds us, "The Soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."

The United States can implement this new and more effective security strategy, because we have many security advantages that other countries don't have. As a country, we cannot be successfully occupied by a foreign military power. How do I know this? I know this is true, because the United States, which has the most powerful military in human history and the support of NATO allies, cannot successfully occupy or achieve military victory in Afghanistan, which is a small and impoverished country. According to high ranking military commanders such as Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus, military victory is not possible in Afghanistan, because victory must be achieved politically by creating a functioning government that the local people support, not militarily through a decisive battle. Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus believed they could use the U.S. military to provide a level of security that would allow a functioning government to emerge in Afghanistan, but one thing we know from history is that every government that cooperates with a foreign occupying power is corrupt. Think of the

Indians who cooperated with the British. The Afghan government is notoriously corrupt, so the question is whether corruption can be stopped and if it can happen quickly enough before our country goes bankrupt.

If the most powerful military in human history and our NATO allies cannot successfully occupy or achieve military victory in a country as small and poor as Afghanistan, what country on Earth could possibly invade and occupy the United States? We have a large population, a huge amount of territory, a lot of mountains, and more guns in this country than people. A foreign invading army that landed on the Pacific Coast wouldn't be able to control California – let alone the entire country – and they wouldn't even get to our shore in the first place if we maintained a competent Navy, which would mostly be performing important missions in our new disaster relief and humanitarian aid role.

The greatest threat to our country is actually from within. Our current approach to fighting terrorism not only threatens to bankrupt our country, but it is causing many of our politicians to abandon American ideals. When America sanctions torture, spies on its own people, and takes away the civil liberties of its citizens, it ceases to be the America that can be a beacon of hope, freedom, and justice around the world.

***What do you think about the U.S. military using drone attacks, which end up causing civilian casualties?***

While I was in the army I worked at DARPA for several months. DARPA is the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which does the high tech research for the military. DARPA helped create the Internet, GPS, Stealth Fighter, M-16, and Predator Drone, which is a small pilotless airplane that can operate anywhere in the world via remote control from the United States. It can perform surveillance missions and launch missiles onto unsuspecting people below. I learned something interesting about the Predator Drone while I was at DARPA. Throughout human history, the bulk of military research has been focused on making weapons deadlier and more destructive. For thousands of years, some of humanity's most brilliant scientific minds were devoted to making sharper swords, bigger guns, and more powerful bombs. But for the first time in history, a large amount of military research is being used to make weapons *less* destructive and more *precise*. At DARPA, I learned that a dream of many military researchers is to develop a precision-guided smart bomb that can accurately kill an enemy combatant while leaving innocent bystanders standing only a few meters away unharmed.

Due to the immense growth of mass media that occurred during and after World War II, people all over the world could see pictures and video that revealed the horror of war and the suffering of innocent civilians. During World War II the U.S. government targeted densely populated civilian areas during its bombing campaigns in cities such as Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. The intention was to kill as many civilians as possible, and that was the international norm at the time; Great Britain and Germany did the same thing. But during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century targeting civilians during bombing campaigns was no longer acceptable within the international community, so the United States had to develop precision-guided smart bombs that minimize civilian casualties. According to the military researchers I spoke with at DARPA, the Predator Drone sounds like a great idea in theory. It has high-tech targeting systems and precision-guided

missiles that are designed to kill enemy combatants without hurting innocent civilians, and because it does not have a pilot, an American will not be killed or captured if it is shot down. I got the impression at DARPA that many of the military researchers had good intentions, but the Predator Drone is an example of good intentions gone horribly wrong.

The Predator Drone is being used in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, and Pakistan, and wherever it is being used it is killing civilians. This is because military researchers are unable to create a precision-guided smart bomb capable of overcoming two major obstacles – human fallibility and the fallibility of technology. An example of human fallibility could include faulty intelligence reports claiming that an Al Qaeda operative is alone in a house in Pakistan, when in reality the house also contains women and children, or perhaps the Al Qaeda operative is not even there. The Predator Drone launches a missile based on this faulty intelligence, and innocent people are killed. Things like this are happening all the time. Another example of human fallibility could include the person operating the Predator Drone making a mistake. Human beings make mistakes every day. During the Vietnam War, for example, thousands of American soldiers were killed by their own comrades in “friendly fire” incidents due to human error. Another reason the Predator Drones are killing so many civilians is because technology is not always reliable. Think of all the problems people have every day with their computers. When technological problems happen with my computer, it becomes an inconvenience that can cost me time and money, but when technological problems happen with the Predator Drone, innocent people can die.

Brian Fishman, who teaches at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, described during his interview on *Bill Moyers Journal* that the old ways of waging war won't work for combating terrorism. He said:

“With the [West Point] cadets in class, we walk through some of the jihadi chat rooms that are used to spread propaganda against their fellow soldiers. And they need to understand – there's a photo out there, a very famous photo that's on all of these chat rooms. It's a picture of a bunch of American soldiers taking a rest in a mosque with their boots on. And it's everywhere... because it's just a symbol of insult to Islam. And the cadets need to understand that even if they are doing something that they think is completely benign, that they don't mean any sort of insult, it can be used against them. And it's that kind of awareness that they need to get to the point where they understand that they could accidentally do something extraordinarily insulting. That photograph is more of a strategic defeat than any sort of tactical engagement on the battlefield. And we need to understand it and the cadets need to understand that... And so what we tell these cadets is, look, this war against Al Qaeda cannot be won or lost in Iraq. Ultimately, this is a fight for hearts and minds around the Middle East. And that's a cliché, but it's true. And that's why these cadets, they can't win that fight with an M-4 [assault rifle].”

***Is it too late to change course now, and do you have hope for the future?***

I have a lot of hope for the future for many reasons. I am half Korean, a quarter white, and a quarter black, and my American ancestors were slaves. My father – who served in the army for thirty years and fought in the Korean and Vietnam wars – was born in 1925 and grew up during the Great Depression in Virginia under segregation. I

was born in 1980 and grew up in Alabama, and although things were far from perfect when I was growing up, I had many opportunities my father never had, and he had many opportunities his slave ancestors never had, because patriotic Americans such as Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Mark Twain, General Smedley Butler, Alice Paul, Woody Guthrie, Martin Luther King, Jr., and countless others worked to make our country a better place. Two hundred years ago in America women could not own property, and less than 10% of the American population could vote. African Americans couldn't vote. Women couldn't vote. And most white people couldn't vote because they didn't own land. I – along with many others – am living proof that change is possible.

Our ancestors confronted the problem of American hypocrisy in the past, and they made a positive impact. For example, the Declaration of Independence said “all men are created equal,” yet the U.S. government sanctioned slavery. Frederick Douglass saw racial inequality as the utmost hypocrisy, and because of him, Martin Luther King, Jr., and countless others, the system of segregation in the South was dismantled. It's as if the Declaration of Independence was a document far ahead of its time, and we are still trying to make its ideals a reality today. We have a long way to go as a country before liberty, justice, and peace achieve their fullest expressions around the world, and racism is still a problem in America today, but if we have come so far, why can't we keep moving in a positive direction? Of course, it will require action on our behalf.

What I am offering is a very hopeful message, because if we believe that people in the Middle East hate us because we're free, then we will be at war forever. But if we understand that many people in the Middle East want freedom just like we do, and many of our problems are being caused by mistakes we are making that are within our power to change, then peace becomes a realistic possibility. Also, we should never underestimate the power of human forgiveness. Africans were enslaved in America for hundreds of years and the United States killed millions of Native Americans, but their descendents are not trying to massacre white people today in revenge. We killed two to three million people in Vietnam during the war, but has Vietnam attacked us in order to seek vengeance? Even though the Germans killed millions of Jews and Russians during World War II, are the Israelis or Russians killing Germans in revenge today?

The ability to forgive is powerful, especially as new generations emerge, which gives me a lot of hope for the future. But if we do not change course and implement a new and more effective American security strategy that involves stopping the hypocrisy of our politicians, ending the injustice of our current foreign policy, and confronting the root causes of terrorism, we cannot move forward as a country or a global community.

We must also listen to those who disagree with us, and instead of demonizing them we must strive to understand them. For example, I find the “9/11 Truth Movement” – which many people consider a conspiracy theory – to be very interesting. But what interests me the most is why so many Americans believe the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were an “inside job” where the World Trade Center was brought down by controlled demolitions, the Pentagon was hit by a U.S. military missile instead of a hijacked plane, and President Bush and many others planned it in order to justify an invasion of the Middle East for oil profits.

The first time I heard people claim that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were an “inside job,” I was surprised. I don't doubt that there are heartless rulers in power who are

capable of killing their own people, but the U.S. government is not very good at keeping secrets. John F. Kennedy couldn't cheat on his wife without the American people eventually finding out about it, and Nixon couldn't even keep the Watergate scandal a secret. Think about all of the lies that were exposed when Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon papers, and think about the lies surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the flawed intelligence that led up to the Iraq invasion, and countless other examples. President Clinton couldn't even have sex in the oval office without people finding out.

The "9/11 Truth Movement" became popular for several reasons. It gained a lot of momentum after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, because many Americans saw how the government deceived the public about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Many people concluded that if the American government could lie about the reasons for going to war, it could lie about anything. Due to this breach of trust, many people refused to believe anything the U.S. government told them. But believing the U.S. government always lies is as inaccurate as believing it never lies. The U.S. government – like all governments – lies on occasion, and that is why we must be skeptical of what our politicians tell us.

But because trust was breached, many people began to assume that everything the government says is a lie, so if the U.S. government says we killed Osama bin Laden, it must be lie. Since the U.S. government was wrong about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, there has also been an increase in the number of people who believe we never walked on the moon, because anything the government says must be a lie. It's hard to believe that a government so incompetent that it could not successfully lie about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or at least plant a few weapons there, that so badly mismanaged the initial reconstruction efforts during the war because it did not understand the local culture and had not done proper planning, could pull off an orchestrated internal attack as sophisticated as September 11<sup>th</sup> and not get caught.

So breach of trust about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is one reason the "9/11 Truth Movement" gained momentum. Another reason has to do with the helplessness felt by so many Americans. I heard a story on NPR about a study that was done that tried to find if certain personality traits caused people to believe in conspiracy theories, and the study found a correlation between conspiracy theories and feelings of helplessness. Conspiracy theories tend to focus on supremely powerful governments and secret organizations that have the power to orchestrate incredibly complex events without people finding out. In reality, organizations are capable of doing a lot of bad things, but they have a difficult time keeping secrets. People as powerful as the Roman Emperors, Joseph Stalin, and Adolf Hitler could not keep their crimes hidden indefinitely, and our country has a long history of whistleblowers from Daniel Ellsberg to Bradley Manning who expose government secrets.

I think the "9/11 Truth Movement" is losing a little steam because, if the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were an "inside job," it would be the most highly orchestrated government coverup in history with countless opportunities for whistleblowers, but nothing from Wikileaks has turned up any evidence yet. So let's wait and see if anything turns up, and in the meantime it's really interesting to read – in the pursuit of truth – the many scientific explanations that seem to debunk the theory that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were an "inside job." It's important to have a "9/11 Truth Movement," but we must be willing to accept the truth if it turns out that we were attacked not by fellow Americans but by people from the Middle East who hijacked planes. Some of the people

in the “9/11 Truth Movement” simply want the government to conduct a more thorough investigation, and I think that’s a good idea because the lack of an official, credible, and thorough investigation allows rumors and speculation to run wild.

When I gave a talk in Bellingham, Washington, a student from Pakistan told me, “There is something I never understood until I heard your talk. I always saw Americans as being the friendliest people in the world. Americans are so kind, generous, and optimistic, but their government does so many horrible things around the world. I never understood this contradiction. I never understood how the American people could be so wonderful, yet their government could support dictatorships and do so many violent things in other countries. But now I finally understand this contradiction. I finally understand how the American people can be so wonderful, while at the same time their government can be so terrible. *Most Americans don’t know what their government is doing around the world.*”

### ***What are some of the challenges ahead?***

There are many nuances for putting this plan into action that I have not had time to discuss during this short interview, but I think the hopeful future that I have briefly outlined is both possible and necessary. I am not sure if America will be saved. I only know that it *can* be saved if enough people become aware and work together to take constructive action. The American citizens who see through the deceptions and myths of war are underdogs in the struggle to put our country on the right path, and I do not underestimate the challenges ahead. There is a lot of money to be made from war and maintaining the status quo, and many people in America are blinded by ideology and their minds are clouded by fear and anger. But I have seen how my own viewpoints have dramatically changed in recent years, and I believe in the power of the American people to survive, endure, and move closer toward fulfilling the ideals embodied in our Declaration of Independence. Solving our national and global problems is a challenging and worthy struggle, and I think the democratic ideals and the dream of peace are stronger than the obstacles we are facing today.

To solve our national and global problems in the interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must create a peaceful revolution in human thinking, which includes recognizing our shared humanity and understanding that the life of every human being has as much dignity as the life of every American. As this new awareness spreads, what once seemed impossible will become possible.

During one of General MacArthur’s last speeches – given at the 101<sup>st</sup> commencement at Michigan State University – he shared some useful insights about the challenges ahead. I think his words are more relevant now than ever:

“The great question is: Can global war now be outlawed from the world? If so, it would mark the greatest advance in civilization since the Sermon on the Mount. It would lift at one stroke the darkest shadow which has engulfed mankind from the beginning. It would not only remove fear and bring security – it would not only create new moral and spiritual values – it would produce an economic wave of prosperity that would raise the world’s standard of living beyond anything ever dreamed of by man. The hundreds of billions of dollars now spent in mutual preparedness [for war] could conceivably abolish poverty from the face of the earth. It would accomplish even more than this; it would at

one stroke reduce the international tensions that seem to be insurmountable now, to matters of more probable solution... Many will tell you with mockery and ridicule that the abolition of war can be only a dream – that it is but the vague imagining of a visionary. But we must go on or we will go under. And the great criticism that can be made is that the world lacks a plan that will enable us to go on. We have suffered the blood and the sweat and the tears. Now we seek the way and the truth and the light. We are in a new era. The old methods and solutions for this vital problem no longer suffice. We must have new thoughts, new ideas, new concepts... We must have sufficient imagination and courage to translate this universal wish for peace – which is rapidly becoming a universal necessity – into actuality.”