FIGHTING WITH ANOTHER PURPOSE

Veteran Paul Chappell On The Need To End War
Paul Chappell was born in 1980 and raised in Alabama, the son of a Korean mother and a half-white, half-African American father who'd served in Korea and Vietnam. Though Chappell had seen how his father was troubled by his war experiences, he chose to pursue a military career himself, graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2002 and serving in Iraq as an army captain in 2006 and 2007. But even as he signed up for a tour of duty, Chappell was starting to doubt that war was ever going to bring peace in the Middle East, or anywhere else.

A year later, while still an active-duty officer, he published his first book, Will War Ever End? A Soldier’s Vision of Peace for the 21st Century. “I am twenty-eight years old,” he writes, “and I have been obsessed with the problem of war for most of my life.” He went on to write The End of War: How Waging Peace Can Save Humanity, Our Planet, and Our Future. Both books are written in a direct, accessible style that avoids blaming the Left or the Right, and his arguments for peace have appealed to people of all political persuasions.

Chappell now works at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and travels the country talking about the necessity of ending war and “waging peace.” He has a website (www.paulkchappell.com) and is involved with the American Unity Project (www.americanunityproject.com), which features a free online series of documentaries about waging peace. He also trains peace activists — a pursuit he believes should be undertaken with at least as much forethought and strategy as training soldiers for war. He emphasizes that activists must learn to be persuasive, to control their emotions, and to empathize with their opponents. Finally they must take their calling seriously — as seriously as soldiers going into battle. In The End of War, Chappell quotes civil-rights activist Bernard Lafayette: “Nonviolence means fighting back, but you are fighting back with another purpose and other weapons. Number one, your fight is to win that person over.”

Chappell teaches through example. I met him at a weekly peace vigil on a downtown Santa Barbara, California, street corner, where he demonstrated how to engage even strident opponents with empathy and respect. I had lost patience with one such person after ten minutes of unproductive dialogue. Then Chappell showed up. He respectfully engaged my critic for a full forty-five minutes. Their conversation ended with the man thanking Chappell for listening to him and accepting a copy of The End of War. A few weeks later Chappell ran into the man and learned that he had read the book and had changed his mind about war as a means of ending terrorism.

Goodman: Your father was traumatized by his experiences in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Given that knowledge, why did you pursue a career in the military?

Chappell: Growing up, I was taught that you must wage war to end war. Comic books, action movies, video games, politicians — all said that if you wanted to make the world safe, you needed to use violence to defeat the bad guys. War was presented to me as the price you had to pay for peace, and I thought that peace was a goal worth fighting for.

My father didn’t talk much about his wartime experiences, but I do remember him telling me about the suffering children he saw during the Korean War. The message I got was that if soldiers had to be traumatized to save children in Korea, or to save the Jews in Europe, or to protect innocents elsewhere, that’s a sacrifice they were prepared to make. I saw soldiers as people who are willing to give their lives in order to protect others.

I think a lot of people join the military believing they’re going to make the world safer. In the abstract the idea makes sense, because if you had a murderer in your home, of course you’d want an armed police officer there to protect you. But war is a completely different matter. It creates massive casualties — mostly civilian. It wasn’t until I got to West Point that I learned war isn’t the best way to make the world safe.

Goodman: This is something they taught you at West Point?

Chappell: Yes, West Point teaches that war is so dangerous, it should be used only as a last resort. I learned that the United States needs to rely more on diplomacy; that politicians don’t understand war and are too quick to use it as a means of conflict resolution. West Point also teaches that if you want to understand war, you have to understand its limitations and unpredictability. World War I and World War II both started out as limited conflicts and grew into global blood baths. War is like a natural disaster. You can’t control it.

Propaganda has made the word war synonymous with security, but in fact peace is synonymous with security. In the twenty-first century war actually makes us less secure. The United States has military bases in about 150 countries; we spend more on war than the rest of the world combined; we have the most powerful military in human history; and we’re some of the most terrified people on the planet. War and military occupation haven’t made us more secure. They’ve made us more hated in many parts of the world.

Goodman: Some say we’re hated because we’re free.
Chappell: If that’s the case, then how come the terrorists aren’t attacking the many other free countries around the world that don’t have soldiers deployed in the Middle East? How come they’re focusing so much on us and, to some extent, our NATO allies? Look who Osama bin Laden was fighting before he fought us: the Soviets. They weren’t free. Moreover, when bin Laden was our ally, he apparently didn’t care that we were free.

Another factor to consider is that wars are now fought on CNN, Fox News, Al Jazeera, and the Internet as much as they’re fought on the battlefield. Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said recently that the future of war is about perception, and that how we are perceived in the Middle East is vital to American security. It’s just common sense that the more we are in the news for invading Muslim countries, the less safe we are, because terrorism is not a government we can overthrow or a country we can occupy. Terrorism is an idea, a way of thinking. A terrorist can plan an attack from New York or San Francisco or Miami. Terrorism is a transnational criminal organization, and you cannot defeat it by invading a country. In fact, when you invade countries, you make the problem worse, because you kill civilians and create more resentment, more hatred, more enemies. I am increasingly of the mind that there are always preferable alternatives to war. Even if war could be justified, it’s just not effective.

Goodman: Why do politicians miss this point?

Chappell: When you have the strongest military in history, you want to use it. That’s our country’s strength, and people tend to rely on their strengths. Diplomacy puts us on more of an equal footing with other countries, and we don’t want to give up our advantage. Another reason is that there’s so much money to be made from war. In wartime the few make huge profits at the expense of the many. Major General Smedley Butler, a veteran of World War I, said, “War is a racket. It always has been. . . . It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many.”

Goodman: But don’t we all benefit from our military securing the world’s resources?

Chappell: I’m not sure that the Iraq War is just about oil, but I think most people will agree that if there were not a single drop of oil in the Middle East, we would not be over there. It’s a strategic economic interest, but only a very small group of people benefit from it.

It’s not about Americans having access to oil. The primary reason we want to control the oil tap in Iraq is because we know that China, Russia, India, and other emerging industrialized nations need oil, and we want to be the ones who sell it to them. The problem is how much these wars cost. Consider what President Eisenhower said about all the other things we could invest in — schools, hospitals, highways, houses, food — if we weren’t spending so much money on the war machine, and you realize that the majority of the population is hurt by war. General Douglas MacArthur said that if humanity abolished war, the money could be used to wipe poverty from the face of the earth and produce a wave of economic prosperity around the world.

It’s not just the ones who go into battle who are harmed. We’re all hurt by mounting national debt and lack of funding for social programs and infrastructure, while most of the people who benefit from military buildups are already rich. You and I are not getting rich off the war in Iraq.

Goodman: You’ve said that the military is a “socialist” organization. How so?

Chappell: The military gives you three meals a day, pays for your healthcare and your college, and even pays for your housing. On an army field exercise, the highest-ranking soldiers eat last, and the lowest-ranking soldiers eat first. Leaders are supposed to sacrifice for their subordinates. In civilian society we’re told that the only thing that makes people work hard is the profit motive. The army’s philosophy is that you can get people to work hard based on the ideals of selflessness, sacrifice, and service. It demonstrates that people will even sacrifice their lives for the sake of others. The military also has a motto: “Never leave a fallen comrade.”

If I said to most Americans that we should have a society that gives everyone three meals a day, shelter, healthcare, and a college education, and that it should be based on selflessness, sacrifice, and service rather than greed, they’d say, “That’s socialism.” But that’s the U.S. military. A lot of conservative Republicans who think socialism is the ultimate evil admire the military.

Goodman: What do they say when you point out to them that the military is socialist?

Chappell: I don’t usually use the word socialist with them. When I try to persuade people that America should have universal healthcare, I say, “You know, in the military we have universal healthcare, and the military believes that you should never leave a fallen comrade behind. You take care of everyone.” They usually agree that this makes sense.

Goodman: When did this idea first occur to you?

Chappell: When I was at West Point. I don’t think I really knew what socialism was at that point, but I knew that West Point was different from how I’d grown up. You have a sense in America that you’re all alone. It’s survival of the fittest. But at West Point they have a saying: “Cooperate and graduate.” Your classmates will tutor you in chemistry, physics, calculus — whatever you need. If anyone fails a class because of not understanding the material, his or her fellow students are partly responsible, because they didn’t aid a classmate who needed help. Every professor has to give you his or her home phone number and allot two hours a day to additional instruction for any students who need it. So you feel as if people care about you. There’s a sense of camaraderie and solidarity. Your classmates aren’t trying to get a better grade than everyone else; they’ll actually help you excel and graduate.
I am not saying that the military is a utopia — far from it. The military as an institution has a lot of things wrong with it, but it also has some admirable characteristics.

**Goodman:** After you graduated from West Point, were you initially happy to be sent to Iraq? When did you really start to change your mind about the war?

**Chappell:** A lot of my friends at West Point were reading Noam Chomsky’s and Howard Zinn’s critiques of American foreign policy, and that’s what started to change my mind. In 2006, while I was stationed in Iraq, West Point invited Chomsky to give a lecture about whether the war in Iraq was a “just war.” I’d never believed that the war in Iraq was just. It violated international law, the United Nations Charter, and the Nuremberg Principles. It also violated the U.S. Constitution, which says that treaties are the supreme law of the land. I did see the war in Afghanistan as a necessary evil — at least, initially. As I studied Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., however, I learned that waging peace is similar to preventive medicine: a more effective healing method than the drastic step of war.

**Goodman:** It’s surprising to me that West Point has students critically analyze current military conflicts. How can soldiers risk their lives or kill people if they think the conflict they’re engaged in is wrong?

**Chappell:** Soldiers are always supposed to be thinking. That’s what West Point teaches its cadets, who are officers in training. You’re supposed to question the orders you’re given, to see whether they conform to the Geneva Conventions and the laws of war. Nevertheless it can be difficult to go against your fellow soldiers. Take the example of Hugh Thompson Jr., the U.S. helicopter pilot who tried to rescue Vietnamese civilians during the My Lai Massacre, in which hundreds of unarmed women, children, and elderly men were killed by U.S. soldiers. He told his machine-gunner to open fire on the Americans if they shot at the people he was trying to save. He was given the Soldier’s Medal and brought to West Point to lecture, as a way of saying, “Do the right thing.” But that was about thirty years after the fact. For the first twenty years or so he was an outcast. He received death threats from people in the military. So really the message was “Do the right thing, and in twenty or thirty years people might appreciate it.”

**Goodman:** You actually volunteered to deploy in Iraq in 2006.

**Chappell:** Yes, the mission I volunteered for was to install a new system called “Counter Rocket, Artillery, and Mortar.” A mortar is a projectile bomb launched from an upright tube. The radar system would detect incoming rockets or mortars, and machine guns would shoot the explosives down in midflight. So it was a defensive role. If I did my job properly, fewer people would be killed.

The way I rationalized my choice was that Gandhi had volunteered as a medic in the Boer War and the Zulu War. He didn’t believe in violence, but if these wars were going to happen, he thought he should do what he could to minimize the loss of life. I don’t know if I made the right decision, but that was the way I thought about it at the time.

**Goodman:** Were you ever in a situation where you felt that your values were compromised?

**Chappell:** No, the biggest dangers I faced were mortar attacks, IEDs [ improvised explosive devices] while we were traveling from base to base, and sniper fire while we were installing the radar on the perimeter of the bases. I worked closely with a small team of soldiers, and unfortunately one of them was killed by a sniper not long after I left Iraq.

I have a good friend who changed his job in the army from being a shooter to explosive-ordnance disposal — disarming bombs, like the soldiers in the movie The Hurt Locker. He wanted a role that was more defensive; he didn’t want to kill anybody. You might ask why he didn’t leave the military if he was opposed to fighting, but in his position is he any more culpable than the rest of us who are paying taxes that support the war? Not many Americans are willing to risk going to prison to voice their opposition.

**Goodman:** You said you originally thought the war in Afghanistan was justified.

**Chappell:** At the time I thought some wars might be necessary, and I thought that the Taliban were training terrorists. I didn’t understand the nature of terrorism then as well as I do now. Terrorism is an ideology, a way of thinking. To fight it, we need to change U.S. foreign policy. Eisenhower, the first president to identify Middle Eastern unrest as a threat to the United States, said that the reason people in the Middle East hate us is that we suppress freedom there. We support dictatorships. We prevent democratic progress, which is the opposite of what we say we’re doing. We have to practice what we preach, which means we can’t talk about human rights and also support dictators.

The seed of terrorism grows in the soil of hopelessness, depression, and fear; of poverty, hunger, and injustice. Killing civilians and occupying countries only exacerbate terrorism. Even the middle-class or affluent terrorists feel oppressed and estranged from their native culture. We need to fight terrorism the way we go after the Mafia: break up their networks, attack their funding, arrest the leaders, put them on trial, and send them to prison.

Imagine if America’s reputation around the world were strictly for providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief; if, whenever there was a disaster, the Americans came, helped, and left. Then, if terrorists attacked the U.S., world opinion would be on our side. We wouldn’t have to defend ourselves against terrorists; the rest of the world would do it for us.

Another big problem with the war in Afghanistan is that the Karzai government is corrupt, because any government that cooperates with an occupying foreign power is always going to be corrupt. Think of the Indians who cooperated with the British. Think of the French who cooperated with the Germans. The Karzai government is notoriously full of warlords and drug lords. Many Afghans prefer the Taliban — that’s how bad it is. Marine lieutenant colonel Christian Cabaniss, interviewed on 60 Minutes last year, said that if you kill a thousand Taliban and two civilians, it’s a loss. General Stanley McChrystal, former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, has said the same. That was the whole point of the counterinsurgency doctrine:
to avoid killing civilians, because it creates more insurgents. But when you realize that most of the people killed in modern war are civilians, you see that we’re fighting a losing battle.

One thing I learned at West Point is that in order to think strategically, you must be able to see the world from your opponent’s point of view. And from the point of view of the average Afghan, the U.S. military is there to keep a corrupt government in power. Many don’t see us as peacekeepers.

Goodman: What about in the capital, Kabul? The non-governmental aid organizations there seem to value our presence.

Chappell: We are providing some security in the cities, but Afghanistan is predominantly a rural country. If you don’t win the hearts and minds of the rural population, you can’t win over the Afghan people. The Taliban have a lot of influence in the vast rural areas, which are more difficult for American forces to occupy and control.

Goodman: What will happen to the rights of Afghan women if we leave the country to the Taliban?

Chappell: I think we have to look at why the Taliban came to power in the first place. After the Soviets left, the warlords took over, and many of them were raping women and pillaging villages. The Taliban gained support by stopping the rapes. The leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, reportedly led his soldiers in the rescue of two girls who had been kidnapped and raped by a warlord. So if you’re a villager, and you have to choose between your daughter not being able to go to school and your daughter being raped by a warlord, which is the better alternative? It’s not that the people want the Taliban. They just fear the warlords more. Now the Karzai government is treating segments of the population so badly that it is making the Taliban look like a better alternative. Moreover, the Karzai government is no champion of women’s rights.

Greg Mortenson, the author of Three Cups of Tea and Stones into Schools, went to Afghanistan in the 1990s and asked the people what they wanted, and their reply was schools, especially for their daughters. He says that if you educate Afghan girls to fifth grade, three things will happen: birthrates and infant-mortality rates will drop; the quality of village life will improve; and mothers will say no when their sons ask for permission to make jihad, or holy war.

Americans have a difficult time imagining ways of solving problems that don’t involve bombing. That is why many countries question whether our intentions are truly to promote liberty, human rights, and women’s rights, or whether our motivations are imperialistic in nature. If we are occupying Afghanistan to liberate women, for example, how do we explain our close alliance with the Saudi Arabian government, which oppresses women? Other countries notice that when governments cooperate with us and give us access to their oil, we couldn’t care less about their human-rights records, and that makes us look like hypocrites. Saddam Hussein was executed for crimes he committed while he was our ally. We actually increased our support for him after he committed those crimes. The only way our actions appear consistent is if you assume our foreign policy is about protecting our own economic interests.

Goodman: Do you have a suggested solution in Afghanistan?

Chappell: There are a lot of them. It’s like Howard Zinn said:
We need to fight terrorism the way we go after the Mafia: break up their networks, attack their funding, arrest the leaders, put them on trial, and send them to prison.

Imagine if America’s reputation around the world were strictly for providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief; if, whenever there was a disaster, the Americans came, helped, and left. Then, if terrorists attacked the U.S., world opinion would be on our side.

“Between war and passivity there are a thousand possibilities.” We don’t have to occupy a country militarily for it to achieve democratic progress. We could support democratic institutions within the country. There are people within Afghanistan who want democracy, who want women’s rights. We could provide support to those people — not in the form of guns and bombs and weaponry, but through constructive aid.

Human beings aren’t naturally violent. We’re told that human nature is the reason for war, but the way I see it, military history shows how nonviolent we are.

Goodman: What do you mean?

Chappell: If you want to know whether our instincts are geared more toward love or toward hatred, you just have to look at war propaganda. In every culture the warmongers tell us that we have to protect our families, our freedom, and our way of life from evil people in some foreign land who want to take all of that away. War propaganda manipulates our most powerful instincts: love of family, love of freedom, and the desire to help others — even our enemies. The Roman emperor said he was liberating the poor barbarians, who didn’t have Roman civilization or wisdom. Mao Tse-tung said he was liberating the Tibetans from the dictator known as the Dalai Lama. The colonial powers in Europe were trying to liberate Africans, who were living in “darkness,” and bring them civilization and Christianity. We’re trying to liberate the Iraqi people and Afghan women. Wars are always about liberating people and self-defense. There has never been a war in history where the invaders openly said, “We’re going to war for the money.”

Also, war propaganda never portrays the soldiers on the other side as human. It hides the fact that we’re killing other human beings. We’re killing monsters; we’re killing cockroaches; we’re killing subhumans — “gooks,” “japs,” “krauts,” and “Commies.” If we were naturally violent, our leaders could just say, “I’m going to give you a chance to kill people. I’ll even pay you!” I’ve never seen a military-recruiting commercial that even mentions killing people. They say, “Join the army and go to college,” “serve your country,” “be all that you can be.” Join the navy and “accelerate your life,” or the air force and “aim high.” You never see a commercial that says, “Join the army and kill people just like you.”

Goodman: Will we ever stop getting fooled by the propaganda?

Chappell: I think so. Look at Europe. For five hundred years Europe was the bloodiest place on earth. That’s why Europeans were able to conquer almost every continent: the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia. The Europeans waged so much war among themselves, they made warfare into a science. When they went abroad, other cultures couldn’t compete with European armies, who’d been practicing for five hundred years.

But now look at Western Europe. Can you even imagine the Germans fighting the British, or the British fighting the Italians? If the leader of Germany said, “We have to attack France,” Germans would say, “Wait a minute. We’ve heard this before.”

Even in America people have learned. Which politicians most wanted to abolish the draft? It was the warmongers. They knew that as long as we had a draft, it would be difficult to get Americans to go to war. Do you think we would have gone to war in Iraq if they were taking middle-class kids out of college to topple Saddam Hussein? There would have been more massive protests.

So Americans did learn after Vietnam, but the warmongers learned too. They got rid of the draft. They changed the rules for the media so that reporters have to be “embedded” with a military unit, which lets the military control the information. They also launched a propaganda campaign about “supporting the troops,” so if you’re against the war, it looks like you’re against the troops. Still, it took an extraordinary incident like 9/11 to get the populace behind the plan to invade Iraq. So we do learn; but they learn too.

Goodman: The case could be made that we are now killing more people than ever, and we’re even less aware of it.

Chappell: But there is progress if you look at the fact that there are entire regions and even continents now — South America, Western Europe, North America — where there are no armed conflicts between countries. Costa Rica doesn’t even have an army. It feels secure without one because, although there have been civil wars, there hasn’t been much warfare between nations in Central or South America. Think how ridiculous it would be for us to go to war with Canada or Mexico. But that’s not how neighboring countries used to think.

It’s true, though, that in some ways things seem to have gotten worse.

Goodman: Yes, we’ve outsourced the fighting to mercenaries and military contractors.
Chappell: Good point. Many people believe that shrinking the military is the key to ending war, but as the military decreases in size, the numbers of contractors and corporate armies increase. There are corporations that want the military to become privatized. Today we have more contractors than soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike the American military, which is subservient to civilian authority, corporate armies are answerable only to their shareholders. Also, while the nation suffers from prolonged wars, the corporate armies profit.

Goodman: Tell me about the distinction you make between rage and fury.

Chappell: Fury is a rush of adrenaline combined with concern for the safety and well-being of a loved one, so you act to prevent harm. Rage is a rush of adrenaline combined with anger and hatred, so you act to inflict harm. For example: My martial-arts training partner was out with a friend who was attacked by a stranger. My training partner experienced fury and put the attacker in a submission hold, harming him as little as possible while stopping the attack. Rage typically escalates the violence. It is more concerned with inflicting harm on the person who committed the offense. If my training partner had been motivated by rage, he probably would have killed the attacker.

Goodman: In Will War Ever End? you write that a lot of so-called aggressive behavior is actually defensive.

Chappell: Right. The same way a rattlesnake shakes its tail, or a gorilla beats his chest, or a dog growls, most aggressive behavior comes from fear and is meant to prevent additional violence by scaring a potential attacker. The most insecure people are the most aggressive. Men will yell at each other, get in each other’s face, even push their opponent away. It looks and sounds violent, but it’s actually posturing intended to scare the other man off. Unfortunately when nations posture aggressively, there’s nowhere for them to run.

Goodman: Does it seem to you that American culture is growing increasingly violent, from video games to music lyrics to crime rates to our military budget, which now accounts for as much as fifty-three cents of every tax dollar?

Chappell: I think there are two things going on. In his book On Killing, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman points out that throughout most of human history people had to face and acknowledge death. They saw their loved ones die; they buried the bodies; they killed the food they ate. We live in a society that has been sanitized to the point that most people have never seen a dead body, and if they have, it’s been in a funeral home, where it’s been made to look as if it were still alive. Grossman theorizes that, just as the repression of sex in the Victorian Era led to an increase in sexual fetishes, the repression of death in our culture has led to violence fetishes. Never seeing death causes us to be fascinated with images of it in movies, on television, and in video games. At the same time, we fear and deny death: we don’t want to get old; we don’t even want to look old; we pretend that we will live forever. Whenever you repress a natural part of life, strange behaviors emerge.

The murder rate in the U.S. has gone down since 1900, but Grossman says what you really need to look at is the aggravated-assault rate, which is the rate at which people try to kill each other. In 1900 there were fewer roads, no motorized ambulances, few telephones, and no antibiotics, so deaths from aggravated assaults were much higher than they are now. Today the aggravated-assault rate is five or six times what it was in 1900, but most aggravated-assault victims survive. If we had the same limited lifesaving abilities today as we did in 1900, our murder rate would be far higher now than it was then.

Grossman also finds a distinct correlation between violent media and violent crime. For example, during World War II only 15–20 percent of combat soldiers who had a chance to shoot at the enemy actually fired. During the Korean War that went up to 55 percent. During the Vietnam War it went up to 90–95 percent. Today it’s nearly 100 percent. The primary reason the number went up so dramatically is that the military added desensitization and conditioning techniques to its training. During World War II soldiers were trained to shoot at a round bull’s-eye. When they had to shoot at a human being in combat, they often couldn’t bring themselves to fire their weapons. During the Vietnam War soldiers were trained to fire at targets shaped like human beings. Violent video games offer countless lifelike depictions of human beings for players to shoot, breaking down the mental barriers that make it difficult for most of us to kill another person. If shooting a silhouette shaped like a human being increased firing during the Vietnam War, think about the effect of killing photo-realistic human beings who bleed, scream, and writhe on screen when they die. When people say that violent video games don’t train us to kill, they are showing how little they know about military training.

The military’s training is actually less extreme than violent media. America’s Army, a video game made by the army as a recruiting tool, is less violent than such popular video games as Modern Warfare 2. In the original America’s Army game if you fire your weapon when you aren’t supposed to, you end up in jail, and the game is over. In Modern Warfare 2 there is a part of the game where you are encouraged to execute a crowd of civilians. There is an option to skip that segment, but
if you do, you miss an integral part of the plot. Some violent video games reward you for shooting your weapon recklessly. Warlords have used these video games to train child soldiers to terrorize and massacre civilian populations. This doesn’t mean that violent video games will lead everyone who plays them to massacre civilians, but playing them makes it easier for us to kill.

We’re biologically hard-wired to stare at violence: it’s a threat; it demands our attention. Just as we’d stare at a bear that came into the room, we stare at violence when it occurs — not just for immediate protection, but to gather survival data. One reason little kids will come running to see a fight is because, on a subconscious level, they want to know what to do if they’re ever in that situation.

Goodman: A lot of times they’re not just staring. They’re cheering.

Chappell: It depends. Some kids are horrified when they see a fight. Some will try to break it up. But we do live in a society where people cheer for the side they want to win. If you’ve watched boxing or action movies or wrestling, you’ve been conditioned to cheer. And what if a kid is standing up to a bully? We all cheer for the underdog.

In On Killing Grossman says that human-on-human violence is the universal human phobia. Not everyone is afraid of snakes or spiders or heights, but 98 percent of people are afraid of being attacked by another human. Every year tens of thousands of people are killed in car accidents; yet every day tens of millions of people casually drive to work. Every year hundreds of thousands of people die from smoking; yet every day millions of people smoke. But if a serial killer kills two people, the whole town goes on alert. One terrorist attack, and the entire country freaks out.

What makes terrorism so dangerous is that it triggers this universal human phobia. We end up doing far more harm to ourselves in reaction to the threat of terrorism than the terrorists could ever do. If Osama bin Laden had told us to give up our values, betray our principles, curtail our civil liberties, spy on our own people, torture captives, and escalate our national debt, we never would have done it. But by attacking us, he got us to do all those things willingly.

Goodman: As a parent of sons, I heard that if I didn’t let my boys play with toy guns, they would just make guns out of sticks. Is this not an indication that violence is in our genes?

Chappell: We need to look at the difference between violence and play. In play as soon as someone gets hurt, the game stops. When two puppies are biting each other, and one puppy yelps in pain, the play stops. If two boys are playing swords with sticks and one boy gets hurt, the play stops. The intention of violence is to inflict pain; you want to hurt people. The intention of play is to have fun, practice hand-eye coordination, test your strength against your peers, bond socially, and so on. Play is crucial, not just for humans but for all mammals. Nearly all young mammals like to wrestle. It builds muscular strength and the connections in your brain that govern motor control and balance. But it has nothing to do with violence.

Goodman: So how can we wage peace?

Chappell: First we have to challenge the myths that support the institution of war. It can be done. Look at slavery. It was a global institution that had been around since the beginning of recorded history. It’s in the Bible. Every country had some form of it. It built the economies of most of them. What made people believe it was possible to abolish state-sanctioned slavery? Did all these slave owners suddenly look in the mirror and realize they were bad people? No, slavery was rationalized through a myth that said it was in the nature of some races, or certain subgroups of races, to be slaves. Today if I said, “White people yearn for freedom, but black people don’t,” you’d think I was crazy, but that’s what people used to believe: A cat’s happy being a cat; a dog’s happy being a dog; a slave is happy being a slave. And just as I’m a kind master of my sheep and my horse and my dog, I’m a kind master of my slave. To let my slaves go would be morally irresponsible, just like letting my sheep go. They would die! They need my protection.

Then, during the eighteenth century, some thinkers put forth the idea that all humans yearn for freedom. Further, it was recognized that you have to use harsh methods to suppress people’s yearning for freedom. After that, we had the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and slave revolts around the world. People started to realize it wasn’t a part of some people’s nature to want to be slaves.

Now many of us believe the myth that human beings are naturally violent, so war is inevitable. Look at who benefits from that myth. If human beings are naturally violent, politicians can’t be held responsible for making war; they’re just trying to protect us from the violent people all over the planet. Weapons makers can’t be held responsible; they’re just trying to help us defend ourselves. But in truth humans aren’t naturally violent, so we’re all responsible. War is a choice. General Omar Bradley, a veteran of World War II, said, “Wars can be prevented just as surely as they can be provoked, and we who fail to prevent them must share in the guilt for the dead.”

There have been grassroots campaigns to end slavery, to end apartheid, to secure the rights of women and workers, to save the whales, to save the planet, but there has never been a grassroots campaign to go to war against people in a distant land. War always comes from the top down. The people are typically reluctant to go to war, and the government has to use propaganda or force to get them to go.

Goodman: What about the American Revolution, or the Civil War, or the war between the Serbs and the Croats? Aren’t those grassroots-inspired wars?

Chappell: The American Revolution was designed and initiated by the wealthy elites. Most Americans had nothing to gain from it. Well into the 1800s the only Americans who could vote were white male landowners. Poor white people couldn’t vote. African Americans couldn’t vote. Women couldn’t vote. Westward expansion was also driven by the government. Where civil wars and genocide are concerned, author Daniel Jonah Goldhagen has said that genocide is always political. There is a myth that genocide erupts spontaneously from the masses, but in reality it is always planned, political in nature, and manufactured by politicians and leaders.
Goodman: So how can we end war?
Chappell: As I said, the first step is to challenge the underlying myths that perpetuate war. War comes from the human mind, from how people think. That’s what we have to change.

Goodman: But the people who wage war have convinced themselves of its necessity.
Chappell: They’ve decided that war is their best option, but if you give them a more appealing one, they’ll switch. The problem with the peace movement is that it doesn’t give people better alternatives to fight terrorism and keep the world secure.

Goodman: In a world of increasingly scarce resources, what’s to keep Americans from thinking it’s justifiable to use military power to ensure our access to resources, and the rest of the world be damned?
Chappell: That strategy is like the Chinese finger trap: the harder you pull, the tighter it gets. The more you care only about yourself, the more you undermine your own position. Look at the organs of the body: The brain, the heart, and the kidneys don’t work only for their own health but for the health of the body. They have to be selfless to some extent, or they’ll kill the body — and themselves along with it. The more we can protect and secure the safety and freedom of other countries, the better we can protect our own. If we think only of our own self-interest, we are going to destroy the planet and our country along with it.

Two hundred years ago people in this country didn’t identify themselves as Americans first. They identified as Virginians, Georgians, or New Yorkers. Now everyone is an American first and a New Yorker or a Virginian second. It’s just another small leap to identify oneself as a citizen of the planet first and an American second. And when we make that leap, it will change how we interact with other countries.

Goodman: Peace activists are often accused of being unpatriotic, of giving aid and comfort to the enemy.
Chappell: But patriotism is at the heart of the peace movement. It’s based on love of country — not blind love, but love that works to make our country as good as it can be. If you love your child, you don’t let that child lie and steal and abuse other people; you correct him or her. If you love your country, you try to correct it when it goes off course. There are peace activists who say they hate America, who burn the flag, but that’s typically because they are angry and hurt at what America is doing. I tell those activists that such behavior is counterproductive; it turns people against them. I’ve seen protests that made me not want to be a peace activist. They were poorly planned, hateful circuses.

Goodman: What does an effective protest look like?
Chappell: The message is clear, and the action is well thought out, peaceful, and orderly. Peace activist Colman McCarthy told me, “I like to dress like a conservative and talk like an anarchist.” If we care about reaching the people who disagree with us, we have to look more like them. The liberals are already with us.

We also have to offer real hope, real solutions. Burning the American flag — what’s the point of that? I don’t see the American flag as a holy symbol, but burning it doesn’t bring mainstream people over to our side. It just alienates them.

Goodman: You said that people who burn the flag are angry at America. What should war protesters do with their anger?
Chappell: Find a way to channel it away from bitterness and into constructive action. Most peace activists are middle-class citizens who aren’t living under the yoke of oppression. We should be able to control our anger. Look at Gandhi: He lived under British oppression. He was attacked on numerous occasions, received death threats, and spent about seven years in jail. Yet he didn’t burn the British flag. He considered himself a British citizen and said that what he was doing was for the well-being of Great Britain as well as the Indian people. Martin Luther King Jr. lived under segregation. Someone bombed his house. He was arrested multiple times and received daily death threats. But he wasn’t bitter. Can you imagine Martin Luther King Jr. burning the American flag? If these leaders could go through all they went through and not become bitter, then I think war protesters can muster up a little more fortitude and resilience.

Goodman: But aren’t you angry on behalf of the millions of people around the world who have been killed in our name? Aren’t you angry about the villages that have been napalmed, the jungles defoliated, the cities incinerated, the innocents massacred?
Chappell: I am indeed outraged by these things, but I think outrage is different from anger. What do Buddha, Jesus, Sun Tzu, Seneca, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Albert Schweitzer, martial-arts philosophy, and West Point have in common? They all taught me that anger is dangerous. Out—
rage is my conscience saying, *This is wrong!* When outrage is not supported by a foundation of patience and empathy for all sides, it quickly descends into yelling, resentment, and a shutting down of reason, which doesn’t effectively advance the cause of peace. We can spark people’s outrage without inciting their anger. So, yes, let’s all be outraged by these things, but let’s channel our outrage into productive action.

The way you get rid of anger is through understanding. As Gene Knudsen Hoffman, founder of Compassionate Listening, said, “An enemy is someone whose story you haven’t heard.” The reason I’m not angry at conservatives is because I’ve lived my whole life around them and don’t see them as bad people. They are not the enemy. My opponents are ignorance, greed, and hatred, which seem to have taken these people hostage.

**Goodman:** How do you convince people who are unapologetically greedy, who want what they want regardless of how it affects anyone else?

**Chappell:** Appreciation is the cure for greed. Greed is a painful way to live, because you’re never satisfied. It’s psychologically exhausting. But some people are taught that greed will make them happy; that if they just had a new car, a bigger house, or another face-lift, they’d be happy. The problem is that greed never ends.

Another myth is that human beings are naturally selfish. Ayn Rand, author of *The Fountainhead,* and John Nash, the scientist depicted in *A Beautiful Mind,* both postulated that allowing people to exercise their natural selfishness and greed would create the best possible society. But later in life Nash retracted his theory, which he’d promulgated while he was an untreated paranoid schizophrenic. In the BBC documentary *The Trap,* filmed after his condition had improved, Nash said he’d been mistaken. The same documentary showed research that only two groups of people consistently make decisions in a self-interested way: psychopaths and economists. [Laughs.]

**Goodman:** How would you design a peace strategy for the U.S.?

**Chappell:** Long-lasting social change has to come from changing the way people think. So I would challenge the myths that support war, and I’d explain that the economy is unstable because of war; the jobless rate is so high because of war; there’s no money for cities or states or education because of war. In other words, I would make the costs of war immediately and apparent to citizens, while showing that war doesn’t make us safe. Because when people believe that war protects their freedom, families, and way of life, they are willing to pay any price.

**Goodman:** What about tax resistance as a strategy for opposition?

**Chappell:** The problem is that people will say, “Are you really that opposed to the war, or do you just not want to pay taxes?” They asked the same question of conscientious objectors: Were they really opposed to the war, or were they just afraid of getting shot? When people can’t prove their true motivations, their actions lose impact. That’s why it’s so effective when veterans speak out against war, because people know they aren’t afraid to fight.

**Goodman:** Couldn’t refusal to pay taxes apply a “submissi

**Chappell:** Perhaps, if enough people did it. Gandhi’s refusal to buy British goods or his famous Salt March?

**Chappell:** Perhaps, if enough people did it. Gandhi’s Salt March worked because it challenged such an outrageous law — preventing people from harvesting salt from the ocean —
that the injustice was instantly grasped by millions. Did Great Britain own the oceans? Of course not. Gandhi carefully chose the right battle.

**Goodman:** What kind of training do you give peace activists?

**Chappell:** How to remain calm is important. And the key to remaining calm is to have empathy for your opponent. The more I empathize with you, the harder it is for me to get angry at you. If you get angry at me, I don't respond in kind, because I see how you are suffering. It takes years of practice — and getting tired of being angry — to master it, but it's such an important skill to have. Without empathy it's easy to become bitter and cynical.

**Goodman:** I have trouble identifying with the suffering of wealthy, white Americans who have more than anyone else on the planet and are fighting for their right to impose their will on the rest of the world. Sometimes I want to strangle them.

**Chappell:** [Laughs.] It is outrageous! But here's the thing: if you'd been born into their circumstances and had their life experiences, you'd probably be just like them. So what happened to them to make them like that? In the army there's a saying: “If someone goes wrong, you have to examine their training.” So what did society and the educational system and these people's parents teach them that made them like that? It's easy to empathize with our friends, but the real test is to empathize with those we feel deserve our compassion the least.

**Goodman:** It's easy to empathize with the oppressed. It's hard to empathize with oppressors.

**Chappell:** I think being an oppressor is another kind of oppression. Mother Teresa called this the “poverty of spirit,” the “poverty of lack of love.” She said that there was no sickness in the world greater than that one.

**Goodman:** Yes, ultimately, but most political debate is not going to reveal the personal scars and wounds that are causing them to oppress others.

**Chappell:** I try to imagine them as children, before they became the way they are. I imagine them as three-year-olds. It's hard for me to hate even a horribly misguided three-year-old. I firmly believe that people can change, even when the chance of change is small. Also, you don't have to convince every single person for dramatic change to occur; you just have to convince enough people.

**Goodman:** I believe that too, but I think it will have to be life experiences that turn them around — not a conversation.

**Chappell:** A conversation can plant the seed. The right conversation creates tension in a person's mind, which can initiate change. Don't discount one-on-one efforts.

**Goodman:** What other skills do peace activists need besides the ability to remain calm?

**Chappell:** We need training in how to be persuasive and in understanding other people's worldviews, because if you attack someone's worldview, they are likely to react as if you are attacking them physically. It's part of who they are. When Martin Luther King Jr. challenged segregation, he was challenging everything that white Southerners believed: that black people were inferior; that racial harmony was impossible; that segregation was the only way the races could live peaceably together. So King took an innovative approach: he tied his ideas to his opponents' existing worldview by likening black Americans' fight for civil rights to the Hebrews' struggle for freedom from oppression in Egypt. This made the challenge to segregation less threatening. King also reminded Americans what the Declaration of Independence says: that "all men are created equal."

We need to learn to tie a new idea to a familiar one so that it becomes less threatening. For example, in the healthcare debate some people on the Left said, “We should be more like Canada.” But most Americans don't know much about Canada. Maybe they don't want to be like Canada. So when I talk to conservatives about healthcare, I talk to them about Jesus and the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan helped the stranger; he paid for his medical bills. I once saw a bumper sticker that said, “Jesus treated preexisting conditions.” Jesus told his disciples to “go and do likewise.”

When I'm talking about ending war, I quote Eisenhower or MacArthur, or I reference what I learned at West Point, because those are people and institutions that conservatives respect. For them to call me “crazy” would be like saying that Eisenhower and West Point are crazy. By quoting someone they trust, I'm also trying to circumvent their fear. The difference between manipulation and persuasion is that manipulation uses fear, which clouds the mind. It's difficult to think clearly when you're afraid. Persuasion appeals to people's reason, understanding, compassion, and conscience. If I'm trying to persuade you, I want you to be calm, rational. I want to give you all the evidence so that you can make the right decision.

**Goodman:** What do you say to people who consider peace a noble but naive ideal?

**Chappell:** Anyone who thinks ending war is naive hasn't put enough thought into it. What's naive is to think that wars can continue and humanity will survive. It's naive to think the planet is a limitless resource. It's naive to think that we can create ever more powerful means of killing each other and not destroy the planet.

**Goodman:** Still, we seem to be firmly in the grasp of the military-industrial complex. Can we really free ourselves?

**Chappell:** Think about the civil-rights movement. At that time the people who maintained segregation controlled the government, the news media, the universities, the military, and most of the money. What did the activists have? The truth. We now acknowledge that African Americans are not inferior to whites; that racial harmony is possible; that it's unnatural to keep black and white people separate. It was the same with the women's-suffrage movement: Women were denied the right to vote because they were thought to be intellectually inferior to men. And men controlled the government, the media, the military, and most of the money. But truth was on the side of the women's movement.

How will we win? We have the truth.
**CORRESPONDENCE**

**THE SUN ALWAYS OPENS MY MIND**
and my heart, but I have never been as inspired as I was by Leslee Goodman’s interview with Paul Chappell (“Fighting with Another Purpose,” April 2011). My father graduated from West Point in 1953, and were he alive today, he would have signed up on the spot to “wage peace” with Chappell. I am spreading the word about him. Thank you for bringing his work to light.

Alicia Irwin
Greenville, South Carolina

**I DIDN’T RENEW MY TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION** when the reminder came in the mail, but I just sent in the one-year subscription card that came with the April issue. Why?

The quotations about war on the April 21 Sunbeams page grabbed me with their pungency, wisdom, and balance. Then I read the Dog-Eared Page excerpt from Kurt Vonnegut’s novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, with its backwards-motion images of World War II bombers flying over Europe, taking bombs back into their bellies, and German fighter planes sucking bullets out of the bombers and their crews. What a beautiful, healing reversal of the madness of war.

In the interview I learned about veteran Paul Chappell’s conversion from soldier to peace activist. That was the clincher. How could I not continue to read and think and write and act with our best defense in a nuclear attack was hope for the best, not the worst, that the human race is capable of? People. It upsets me to see soldiers systems into a relief-and-aid organization for armed conflict. Paul Chappell should be running the U.S. military machine instead of big businesses, lobbyists, and their political cronies, all of whom fill their pockets at the expense of innocents. History will look at our track record with revulsion.

**The Interview with Paul Chappell**

is electrifying. Here is someone with military experience telling us eloquently and decisively that we have gotten it wrong. It made me want to pick up a placard and take to the streets to decry the stupidity and savagery of war. Fortunately for me I live in Canada, where most of my neighbors share my distaste for armed conflict.

Chappell should be running the U.S. military machine instead of big businesses, lobbyists, and their political cronies, all of whom fill their pockets at the expense of innocents. History will look at our track record with revulsion.

**The Lancet** puts the ratio at more like a hundred to one. Far from being the noble warrior Chappell describes, a soldier is someone responsible for slaughter. Should we honor this?

Neal Herr
Glens Falls, New York

Paul Chappell responds:

Neal Herr is right: one reason we must end war is because, since World War II, the majority of people killed in wars have been civilians. But if we want to stop such tragedy, we must not only criticize but also offer a better vision of how things could be.

I believe the purpose of the American military should be to protect the American people. It upsets me to see soldiers deployed to benefit the economic interests of corporations and the wealthy few. One of the best ways to protect Americans in the twenty-first century would be for the military to provide disaster relief and humanitarian aid around the world, rather than occupying other nations and waging wars that kill civilians.

Some might ask, Why not eliminate the military altogether? But unemployment in America is already high, and it would be much higher if the military were disbanded. Transforming the military into a relief-and-aid organization wouldn’t threaten the livelihood of our troops and their families and would be

**I GREW UP ON A FARM IN CENTRAL Kansas in the 1950s and ’60s. At my two-room country school we were taught that our best defense in a nuclear attack was to crouch under our desks with our hands over our heads. Near my family’s farm was a bombing range where fighter jets and B-47s did practice runs. As I plowed the north forty I would watch the planes maneuver and think of how futile hiding beneath a desk would be in a real war. Humankind had become the angel of death. I went from feeling awe at what we could do to feeling the importance of restraining ourselves and evolving beyond greed and ego.

Paul Chappell is right: the move from being Americans to becoming citizens of the world is essential to our survival. As a society we must give up the bravado of adolescence and take on the wisdom of adulthood. If self-absorption gives way to compassion, anything is possible.

The Bush years numbed us into inactivity, but there are millions of us out there who know in our hearts the futility of war. Chappell calls to us to once again assume our responsibilities as humane beings.

Paul Chappell
Colorado Springs, Colorado

**I FIND PAUL CHAPPELL’S CHARACTERIZATION** of war true and insightful on all points but one: the role of the soldier. Soldiers are not trained to protect, although that angle is an effective recruitment-propaganda strategy. They are trained to kill.

Many sources claim that for every combatant killed, at least ten noncombatants die. The British medical journal

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a more practical strategy for protecting the American people. General MacArthur said, "The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war," and the idea of soldiers serving as protectors as part of a new American security strategy is appealing to many.

We must also change American foreign policy. America has some of the most wonderful ideals: freedom, human rights, democracy. But the rest of the world, for the most part, isn't angry at our ideals. The rest of the world is angry that we don't live up to our ideals. It is not enough to transform soldiers into protectors. We have to end the hypocrisy of politicians who preach democracy and freedom while supporting dictatorships.

I HAD TO SMILE AT SY SAFRANSKY'S suggestion that the elderly be conscripted for military service. [Sy Safransky's Notebook, April 2011]. I was reminded of my eighty-five-year-old father's prescription for world peace: reinstitute the draft but require all soldiers to be eighty and older. With their frequent naps, difficulty lifting a prosthesis because I wanted to bring Elisheva Kirschenbaum protests a picture since June 2011. The picture is "rubbing in" a reality that mastectomy scar. The letter writer says in the January issue of a woman with a ONE OF MY FAVORITE FEATURES IN The Sun is Sy Safransky's Notebook. He faces his terrible blank page every morning with all the enthusiasm of a cow being led to slaughter. But, with fear and trembling and a gift for laughing at himself, he fights the good fight again and again. Reading his battle communiqués, I shook off my own self-doubt for the umpteenth time and believe that I can write a good sentence or two.

Joe Keenan
Franklin, Tennessee

IN THE APRIL 2011 CORRESPONDENCE Elisheva Kirschenbaum protests a picture in the January issue of a woman with a mastectomy scar. The letter writer says the picture is "rubbing in" a reality that "we all dread."

I have been an asymmetrical person since June 1997. I decided not to wear a prosthesis because I wanted to bring awareness to the fact that someone as young as I was — forty-two — could have breast cancer and to show that I felt good about myself even with that scar. The existence of breast cancer is conveniently disguised by reconstructive surgery and prosthetics. I imagine all those women carefully hiding behind that armor, maybe feeling less attractive and alone. I find the picture in the January issue inspiring. I'm encouraged that there are others besides myself who will bare their scars proudly. I hope that Linnie Kraland, the woman in the picture, knows how beautiful she is.

Lynn Swiriduk
Monroe, Maine

COLE THOMPSON'S PHOTOS OF CANCER-survivor Linnie Krauland have touched me deeply. Her face reveals so many feelings: sadness, of course, but also anticipation, surrender, anguish, destruction, and, yes, hope. Maybe it's because of my own experience with breast cancer that I am able to recognize all these emotions in the photos. I feel gratitude to Krauland for sharing her vulnerability and to Thompson for capturing it on film.

Karen Newbolt
Conroe, Texas

THOMAS H. MALLOUK'S CHILDHOOD experience with singing [Readers Write, March 2011] mirrored my own. As a child I loved to sing, but when I was in second grade, my teacher told me just to move my lips. I was devastated. Singing lost its joy.

In spite of this I went on to play several instruments and to major in music in college. I have taught music to schoolchildren and adults and have also directed church choirs. As a young mother I gathered my three small daughters around me at the piano and played and sang songs with them.

Now I have the privilege of sitting at the piano with my first grandchild and playing those same songs. He doesn't seem to mind that my voice was once discordant, George Orwell, J.D. Salinger, and so many other great authors whose books should be required reading but aren't.

Johnny E. Mulaffey
Columbia, South Carolina

I HAVE READ EVERY ISSUE OF THE SUN for twenty-four years. Three months ago I let my subscription lapse for economic reasons, but come the first of the month I went to the store to buy it. Last month I decided a new subscription was cheaper than therapy. I've renewed. It's like coming home.

Jennie Washburn
Baldwin City, Kansas

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