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Questions we must ask

“What is a religious person? A person who is maladjusted; attuned to the agony of others; aware of God’s presence and of God’s needs; a religious person is never satisfied, but always questioning, striving for something deeper, and always refusing to accept inequalities, the status quo, the cruelty and suffering of others.”

Sexual Assaults & Harassments & American Jews

Shock and horror over individual cases of serial sexual harassers and assaulters is just beginning and should not be a tool for ignoring the bigger problem that sexual harassment is used to prevent women from attaining their professional goals.

Yes, a few rabbis have spoken about the issue from the pulpit—and I admire them enormously—but this is an issue that should be addressed more widely within the Jewish community.

So let us ask why so few women hold positions of leadership in Jewish communal organizations.

Let us ask why I am still invited to speak at conferences where I am the only woman on the program.

Let us ask why are editorial boards of journals in Jewish Studies dominated by men—even the journal, *Idea*, that Leon Wieseltier hoped to edit?

Let us ask what happens to women when they achieve positions of authority and whether they encounter the kinds of problems I have encountered from male colleagues?

Let’s keep in mind that while we may not be confronted with sexual assault, we may well encounter snide comments, jokes, winks and rolling eyes in response to our ideas or simply to our very presence.

I propose that every meeting, every conference in the Jewish world should open with a discussion of these issues—starting with Limmud Boston (an annual Jewish “learning fest of culture and identity”). And what are we to do with passages in the Torah that seem to prescribe sexual harassment, such as *Sotah*? Or a parshah such as *Chaye Sarah* that is full of stories of women’s mistreatment? Do we read them as if nothing has happened? Should we omit them? Chant them with a mourning tune? At the very least we need to discuss openly how they have been used to denigrate women, exclude women, harass women? ✧

Let us ask why so few women hold positions of leadership in Jewish communal organizations.

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President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev meets with heads of American Jewish organizations



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Our Involvement in Vietnam

What Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* Completely Missed: The Interfaith Antiwar Movement

Patrick Henry

Burns and Novick's film makes no mention of the interfaith peace movement that had a significant impact on the nonviolent antiwar protest that helped to end the war.

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* is a brilliant antiwar film that humanizes the enemy and laments the brutal slaughter of roughly three million soldiers and civilians for absolutely nothing. It is also a ringing indictment of those American presidents who not only waged this war and consistently lied to the American public about what they were doing and how the war was progressing, but sent tens of thousands of young American soldiers to fight in a war they knew they could not win. As such, *The Vietnam War* offers an urgent warning about the wars we continue to wage in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Burns and Novick's film, however, is not without blemishes. It points out correctly, for example, that a disproportionate number of African Americans served in Vietnam. But there is certainly not a disproportionate number of African-American veterans interviewed in the film. Only three of roughly 85 interviewees. Similarly, the film informs us that, of any identifiable ethnic group, Native Americans had the highest percentage of soldiers serving in Vietnam. Inexplicably, while 42,000 Native Americans served in Vietnam, not a single Native-American veteran is interviewed by the filmmakers.

Additionally, although the peace movement is prominent in the film, Burns and Novick simply do not do justice to its impact. They never let their viewers know that the peace movement eventually garnered enough public support to force Presidents Johnson and Nixon to limit the war they both wanted to expand, thereby helping to bring it to an end.

Most seriously, perhaps, at least from my perspective, the film never even mentions the interfaith antiwar movement. True, in Episode Four, "Resolve," we listen to Martin Luther King, Jr. speak out against the war on April 4, 1967 in Riverside Church in Harlem, but this courageous act is never connected to the larger religious peace movement which had begun several years earlier.

In fact, Catholic Worker co-founder and one of the leading 20th-century peace activists, Dorothy Day, led the first Vietnam War protests during the summer of 1963, almost two years before we officially had ground troops in Vietnam and at least a year before there was any recognizable peace movement. In 1964, Dan and Phil Berrigan, Tom Cornell, Martin Corbin, and Jim Forest co-founded the Catholic Peace Fellowship and, in November of that year, Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, dubbed by ex-Jesuit John Dear "the pastor of the peace movement," hosted a three-day retreat at his monastery in Kentucky on "The Spiritual Roots of Protest" which was attended by people of all faiths and contributed significantly to spreading nonviolent resistance against our expanding activities in Vietnam.

In 1965, at the suggestion of interfaith peace activist Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Daniel Berrigan, then Lutheran theologian Richard Neuhaus, and Heschel formed CALCAV, Clergy and Laity Concerned About the War in Vietnam. They were soon joined by Martin Luther King, Jr., Harvey Cox, William Sloane Coffin, and Reinhold Niebuhr, making CALCAV the largest religious peace group in the country.

Heschel, who claimed to have been jolted out of his study by injustice and warfare, was the most powerful and influential Jewish voice in the movement ("To speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam is blasphemous."). As early as July 1964, he traveled to Kentucky to discuss theology and peace strategies with Merton. Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thích Nhất Hạnh, claimed that he too was unable to remain in the meditation halls while villages were being bombed around him. Proclaiming that "If it isn't engaged Buddhism, it isn't Buddhism," Nhất Hạnh came to the United States to "teach peace." He worked closely with Dan Berrigan and Thomas Merton and in May 1966, he addressed the monks in Merton's monastery.

In Episode Two of Burns and Novick's documentary, "Riding the Tiger," we view in graphic detail the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in Saigon in 1963 who was protesting the repression of the Diem regime. The filmmakers might well have also shown the self-immolation of Roger Laporte, a Catholic Worker, in front of the United Nations Building in November 1965, just eight months after we officially put ground troops in Vietnam. Whereas there is a tradition of self-immolation as an extreme form of protest in Buddhism, nothing similar existed in Catholicism. This was suicide plain and simple. Laporte could not be buried in sacred ground. Jesuit priest, Daniel Berrigan, was strictly forbidden to speak about Laporte's death publicly.

But this was one of Dan Berrigan's finest hours. He did speak publicly and positively about Laporte at a memorial service conducted at the Catholic Worker House. There he argued that, whereas suicide proceeds from despair and loss of hope, Laporte had died in another spirit where death is conceived of as a gift of life. However misguided the act, Berrigan saw it as an offering of self so that others might live. This thinly veiled reference to Christ's death infuriated his superiors. Berrigan was ostracized and quickly shipped out to Latin America by his Jesuit order.

Dan's friends reacted. There were demonstrations at Catholic universities and in front of the office of Cardinal Spellman. On December 12, they took out a full-page ad in *The New York Times* protesting Berrigan's "exile" and the violation of his right to "freedom of conscience." After four months in Latin America, Dan returned to New York on March 8, 1966, now more determined than ever to do everything possible to end the war in Vietnam. In 1967, he and his brother, Philip, became the first Catholic priests to be arrested for opposing the war. In January 1968, he and Howard Zinn, on an invitation from the North Vietnamese government, flew to Hanoi to bring home three captive American airmen.

When Dan Berrigan returned from North Vietnam, he fully understood the limitations of his earlier protests (vigils, petitions, even draft card burnings) and was ready to engage in more radical and more costly resistance. Appropriately, four months later, on May 17, 1968, in an act that would change the nature of Christian nonviolent re-



The cover of TIME magazine on July 25, 1971, featured the Berrigans.

Continued next page

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sistance forever, with eight others, Berrigan entered Local Draft Board No. 33 in Catonsville, Maryland. The participants seized Selective Service records (378 individual 1-A classification folders) and burned them outside the building with home-made napalm to make people understand what Berrigan writes 20 years later in his autobiography that “killing was repugnant to the letter and spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.”

The trial of the Catonsville Nine, held in Baltimore from October 5-9, 1968, became a *cause célèbre*. Hundreds of people gathered at the courthouse every day of the trial.

Although all members of the interfaith antiwar movement worked together for a common goal, there were tensions within the group and specific objections to what the Berrigans were doing. Rabbi Heschel did not practice civil disobedience and thought that going to jail was a waste of time. Dorothy Day was a purely non-violent protester who did not approve of the violence done to property. She was well-aware of the disproportion between burning paper and burning children with napalm but nonetheless maintained that “These actions are not ours.” Like Day, Merton favored a more Gandhian-like, totally nonviolent form of protest, as practiced, for example, by Martin Luther King,

Jr. Merton’s fear was that violence toward property might easily escalate to violence against people and, in the long run, such actions might prove completely

When Dan Berrigan and eight others entered the local Catonsville, MD draft board office on May 17, 1968, they forever changed the nature of Christian nonviolent resistance.



Left: Daniel Berrigan is taken into the Federal Building in Providence on Aug. 11, 1970.



Above: Abraham Heschel

Left: Daniel Berrigan’s last arrest on Apr. 2, 2011 - Good Friday - Intrepid Museum

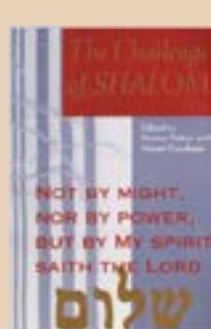
counter-productive. The Berrigans stood their ground on the issue of violence toward “idolatrous things,” maintaining that “some property has no right to exist.” [“Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of

good order, the burning of paper instead of children.”]

Despite these differences, our interfaith warriors were team players who worked together and supported one another in their various endeavors to end the war. Dorothy Day might have claimed that “These actions are not ours,” but she attended every day of the trial of the Catonsville Nine. Rabbi Heschel, a longtime member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship whose newsletter this is, thought that spending time in jail was not the best use of one’s time. Nonetheless, on December 20, 1972, two days before he would die in his sleep, he drove with Dan Berrigan and Tom Lewis to the Danbury Correctional Institute in Connecticut to meet Phil Berrigan who was being released from prison after having served a 39-month sentence. The last time I visited Dan Berrigan, in the Spring of 2010 at the Franciscan Friary on Thompson Street in Greenwich Village, Dan, who in his autobiography referred to Heschel as a “saint, before the judgment” and “a father to me, in more senses than one,” made a point of showing me the blown-up, framed photograph of him and Heschel as they set out that morning for Danbury, Connecticut.

With all due respect to Burns and Novick to whom we are all indebted for their brilliant antiwar film, it is truly incomprehensible that, in an 18-hour documentary on the Vietnam War, there would be no mention whatsoever of these religious peacemakers who constituted the greatest example of interfaith peace activism in our nation’s history. ☆

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*Masters of War***Why the “Merchants of Death” Survive and Prosper**

Lawrence Wittner

American government officials regularly act as salespeople for arms firms.

During the mid-1930s, a best-selling exposé of the international arms trade, combined with a U.S. Congressional investigation of munitions-makers led by Senator Gerald Nye, had a major impact on American public opinion. Convinced that military contractors were stirring up weapons sales and war for their own profit, many people grew critical of these “merchants of death.”

Today, some eight decades later, their successors, now more politely called “defense contractors,” are alive and well. According to a study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, sales of weapons and military services by the world’s largest 100 corporate military purveyors in 2016 (the latest year for which figures are available) rose to \$375 billion. U.S. corporations increased their share of that total to almost 58 percent, supplying weapons to at least 100 nations around the world.

The dominant role played by U.S. corporations in the international arms trade owes a great deal to the efforts of U.S. government officials. “Significant parts of the government,” notes military analyst William Hartung, “are intent on ensuring that American arms will flood the global market and companies like Lockheed and

Boeing will live the good life. From the president on his trips abroad to visit allied world leaders to the secretaries of state and defense to the staffs of U.S. embas-

sies, American officials regularly act as salespeople for the arms firms.” Furthermore, he notes, “the Pentagon is their enabler. From brokering, facilitating, and literally banking the money from arms deals to transferring weapons to favored allies on the taxpayers’ dime, it is in essence the world’s largest arms dealer.”

In 2013, when Tom Kelly, the deputy assistant secretary of the State Department’s Bureau of Political Affairs, was asked during a Congressional hearing about whether the Obama administration was doing enough to promote American weapons exports, he replied: “[We are] advocating on behalf of our companies and doing everything we can to make sure that these sales go through. . . and that is something we are doing every day, basically [on] every continent in the world . . . and we’re constantly thinking of how we can do better.” This proved a fair enough assessment, for during the first six years of the Obama administration, U.S. government officials secured agreements for U.S. weapons sales of more than \$190 billion around the world, especially to the volatile Middle East. Determined to outshine his predecessor, President Donald Trump, on his first overseas trip, bragged about a \$110 billion arms deal (totaling \$350 billion over the next decade) with Saudi Arabia.

The greatest single weapons market remains the United States, for this country ranks first among nations in military spending, with 36 percent of the global total. Trump is a keen military enthusiast, as is the Republican Congress, which is currently in the process of approving a 13 percent increase in the already astronomical U.S. military budget. Much of this future military spending will almost certainly be devoted to purchasing new and very expensive high-tech weapons, for the military contractors are adept at delivering millions of dollars in campaign contributions to needy politicians, employing 700 to 1,000 lobbyists to nudge them along, claiming that their military production facilities are necessary to create jobs, and mobilizing their corporate-funded think tanks to highlight ever-greater foreign “dangers.”

The corporate revolving door, Washington and Trump-style, includes: Secretary of Defense James Mattis (a former board member of General Dynamics); White House Chief of Staff John Kelly (previously employed by several military contractors); Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan (a former Boeing executive); Secretary of the Army Mark Esper (a former Raytheon vice president); Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson (a former consultant to Lockheed Martin); Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition Ellen Lord (a former CEO of an aerospace company); and National Security Council Chief of Staff Keith Kellogg (a former employee of a major military and intelligence contractor).

This formula works very well for U.S. military contractors, as illustrated by the case of Lockheed Martin, the largest arms merchant in the world. In 2016, Lockheed’s weapons sales rose by almost 11 percent to \$41 billion, and the company is well on its way to even greater affluence thanks to its production of the F-35 fighter jet. Lockheed began work on developing the technologically-advanced warplane in the 1980s and, since 2001, the U.S. government has expended over \$100 billion for its production. Today, estimates by military analysts as to the total cost to taxpayers of the 2,440 F-35s desired by Pentagon officials range from \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion, making it the most expensive procurement program in U.S. history.

The F-35’s enthusiasts have justified the enormous expense of the warplane by emphasizing its projected ability to make a quick liftoff and a vertical landing, as well as its adaptability for use by three different branches of the U.S.

military. And its popularity might also reflect their assumption that its raw destructive power will help them win future wars against Russia and China. “We can’t get into those aircraft fast enough,” Lieutenant General Jon Davis, the Marine Corps’ aviation chief, told a House Armed Services subcommittee in early 2017. “We have a game changer, a war winner, on our hands.”

Even so, aircraft specialists point out that the F-35 continues to have severe structural problems and that its high-tech computer command system is vulnerable to cyberattack. “This plane has a long way to go before it’s combat-ready,” remarked a military analyst at the Project on Government Oversight. “Given how long it’s been in development, you have to wonder whether it’ll ever be ready.”

Startled by the extraordinary expense of the F-35 project, Donald Trump initially derided the venture as “out of control.” But, after meeting with Pentagon officials and Lockheed CEO Marilyn Hewson, the new president reversed course, praising “the fantastic” F-35 as a “great plane” and authorizing a multi-billion dollar contract for 90 more of them.

In retrospect, none of this is entirely surprising. After all, other giant military contractors for example, Nazi Germany’s Krupp and I.G. Farben and fascist Japan’s Mitsubishi and Sumitomo prospered heavily by arming their nations for World War II and continued prospering in its aftermath. As long as people retain their faith in the supreme value of military might, we can probably also expect Lockheed Martin and other “merchants of death” to continue profiting from war at the public’s expense. ✪



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F-35A Lightning II

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*Fateful Decisions***When One Person Can Decide If We Live or Die.**

Murray Polner

It's 4 a.m. in Washington and our president, whoever he or she may be, is awakened by a call from the Pentagon's watch officer. "Sir," he shrieks hysterically, "our computers show nukes heading for us. What'll we do?"

Still sleepy, possibly disbelieving the caller but with less than ten minutes to determine if it's yet another nuclear false alarm—in the past, Moscow has had three and we've made the same number of mistakes—the president can pray and kiss his spouse goodbye or do nothing and hope that he and some of his countrymen and women will survive a catastrophic nuclear exchange.

With unchecked power to do as he wishes, our presidents have the legal authority to order their nuclear commanders to fire away. And if our impulsive and unpredictable current president decides to give his military leaders a green light, thus sealing the fate of millions

in Seoul, Tokyo, Guam, and, after Pyongyang retaliates, perhaps some of our east and west coast cities, the real question for amnesiac, consumer-mad and distracted Americans, is whether any American President, now or in the future, can be stopped or delayed in making that fateful decision.

I hold no brief for Dick Cheney, but in December 2008 he said—correctly, I believe—that a president "could launch a kind of devastating [nuclear] attack the world's never seen."

"He doesn't have to check with anybody. He doesn't have to call the Congress. He doesn't have to check with the courts. He has that authority because of the nature of the world we live in."

Moreover, Bruce Blair—who once worked at the Brookings Institution, served as a nuclear launch officer, and is the co-founder of Global Zero, which favors nuclear abolition—said, "there is no way to reverse the president's order. And there would be no recalling missiles once launched." Blair's chilling article appeared in the June 11, 2016

Politico (he's also the author of *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War*) and asked, ominously, "What exactly would it mean to have Trump's finger on the nuclear button?"

"There is no way to reverse any president's order" to bomb away, says Bruce Blair. And once the order is given, there is "no way of recalling missiles once launched." Nor are there any "restraints than can prevent a willful president from unleashing this hell."

In 1998, declassified U.S. documents revealed the Cold War secret that in late 1959 President Eisenhower had allowed certain senior commanders to use nukes in specific demanding situations. These "Predelegations," as they were called, would then allow a rapid response by someone other than the president should the nation face a much-feared Soviet Cold War nuclear attack. Whether it is still in place remains

a deep secret but more than likely the Soviets also have reciprocal Predelegations too, especially since the rebirth of Cold War 2 in Eastern Europe and the Far and Middle East.

Meanwhile, Gareth Porter, one of our shrewder analysts, wondered in *Truthout* if Trump is "planning a first strike on North Korea," a move which some believe may well have to involve U.S. ground troops, which would trigger "yet another unnecessary and terrible war."

Until some alternative remedy to worldwide suicide is developed, there are no alternatives other than nuclear disarmament or serious diplomacy, which no one expects. So, here are a few words of warning, non-Twittered, to all of us from an old fashioned and quite sane WWII general named Omar Bradley. "Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living." ✪

There is no way to reverse a president's order to unleash a nuclear attack, and there is no way to recall nuclear missiles once they have been launched.



In 1948, General Omar Bradley stated, "The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living."

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of *SHALOM*.