

Pursuing Kindoki

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Currently, we are engaged in a war on terror, meaning our national goal is to eliminate the terrorist threat through force. Ostensibly, the goal is world peace. But, can peace be attained through its antithesis-war? What are the implications of adopting violent methods to achieve harmony? In Michael Franti's song, "Bomb the World," he cries, "We can bomb the world to pieces/But we can't bomb it into peace." Here, I will explore the meaning of attainment of peace while using historical and current events to support my ideas.

How do we define peace? The simplest definition is exemplified by the Latin phrase, *absentia belli*, or absence of war. In this sense, peace is defined by what it is not. But does this adequately describe an ideal worth fighting for (peacefully, of course)? I believe not. Societies need more than an absence of violence to grow and prosper. Moreover, this type of peace theoretically could be attained through bombs, if they facilitated the war's ending.

No, Franti must have another definition of peace in mind. If peace is worth achieving, it must have its own defining characteristics. Our use of the word peace connotes respect and goodwill amongst people. As Martin Luther King decried, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice." In the Great Lakes region of Africa, the natives use the word, Kindoki to describe peace. Translated completely, it paints a picture of harmonious balance between humans, nature and the cosmos. Franti's quote describes the inability to achieve Kindoki through warfare.

People have been fighting with the intention of peace, usually at the expense of the enemy or their resources. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson entered the United States into World War I after desperately clinging to neutrality. He focused the nation's resources and attention on winning "the war to end all wars." Wilson truly believed that destroying the Central Powers to create viable democracies would bring lasting world peace. Unfortunately, he could not have been more wrong, as the inequalities left in the wake of the international struggle spawned the inevitability of World War II.

In contrast, Gandhi once spoke, "There is no way to peace; peace is the way." Through Satyagraha (nonviolent opposition), Gandhi embraced peaceful activism by organizing marches and protests. This view of peace rejects all attempts to justify violent actions in the pursuit of peace. Other instances of Satyagraha have produced peace. Switzerland's neutrality policy has ensured its uninvolvement in war since 1815. All countries recognize Switzerland's neutrality and stage international meetings to bring together hostile parties there. Costa Rica eliminated its army in 1949 due to internal unrest. Since then, Costa Rica has been able to focus money on peaceful endeavors like universal health care.

Only by rejecting all strategies except peace, can true peace be attained. Humans have shown an addiction to war, but the successes in peace stand as sturdy models to the rest of humankind, if only we would pay attention.