

Haunting of Arms

By Amy Dao

In the last picture slot of my mom's wallet, there is a picture of a boy whom I have never met in my life. With dark-brown eyes and round cheeks, he resembles me. However, on further inspection, his skin is rough and scaly like a fish. Patches of pink and irritated skin cover his fragile-looking body and he looks no taller than five feet.

My thirteen-year-old cousin, Thin, is affected by the aftermath of Agent Orange, a generation after the U.S. hit Vietnam with the napalm bombs. His skin, genetically affected by the chemicals in the napalm bombs, has to be constantly treated with a medicated cream, or else he is in risk of scratching himself until he bleeds to death. In the picture, he is shown smiling while at the beach, a rare trip that he can only make once or twice a year because of his skin's sensitivity to the sun.

With napalm bombs, atomic bombs, drones, and more, the world seems to be armed with more weapons used to kill people than with medicine to heal them. Last year alone, in 2014, global military spending was said to surpass 1.7 trillion dollars. This is equivalent to 4.6 billion a day, which is twice as much as the U.N.'s annual budget. Using military weapons and technology rather than diplomacy and negotiation has definitely become the "go-to" method for dealing with conflicts.

Proponents of militarization say that they find needed security in arming the country. It is rather ironic, however, that the world seeks security and finds solace in being armed with weapons when the very existence of such weapons is the reason why there is no peace. When one country is found to have the latest military weaponry, other countries become insecure and aim to make some for themselves, thus delving the world in an endless cycle of creating more and more weapons. It is also ironic that while countries are willing to spend billions of dollars on creating such destructive weapons, they are not willing to invest in the effort of negotiation and diplomacy, something that is basically free—ignoring the the costs of the plane ticket to travel to other countries, of course.

Needless to say, diplomacy is no easy matter when there is such a diverse ideological and cultural spectrum of people in this world. However, the persistent effort to maintain peace through less weaponry and more diplomacy will be the key to ending conflict in the long-run and to prevent more people from suffering theonslaught of war and weapons. Gandhi was able to free his country with his voice alone and no weapons at all. After the genocide of Rwanda, the Tutsi and Hutu came up with a peaceful conciliation through community "gacaca" courts. It's time to "fund" the effort of real peace through diplomacy rather than weapons as

we realize that the use of arms to end conflict inevitably comes back to haunt us in the present and in our future.