

## The Aches Remain

My wife and I watched the National Memorial Day Concert in Washington. We honor the men and women who had the courage to stand in harms way for their country. There are 400,000 of them in Arlington Cemetery alone and Colin Powell mentioned over a million dead.

The Concert was a fitting national memorial service in which to eulogize those who served and died for freedom. They are heroes. The Concert also recognized that for each family, friend, or comrade of the courageous dead, the ache remains.

In sharp contrast, the Concert displayed the realities of war: guns, tanks, planes, and bombs—the hardware designed, built, and used to kill. These tools have been deployed between North and South whether of Vietnam, Korea, United States, or others fighting in civil wars with brothers pitted against brother.

WW I was called the war to end all wars. It took two million American soldiers and the lives of 53,402 in combat. Yet wars continue.

A World War II veteran friend of mine was in Hiroshima after United States dropped the first atomic bomb. With one bomb, 90,000–146,000 people were killed and three days later 39,000–80,000 people died in Nagasaki. Today, more than eight countries have nuclear weapons. The goal of freedom will be obliterated in a nuclear war.

There needs to be a better way to resolve our differences.

Martin Luther King Jr. led the American civil rights “war” with non-violence. Such a war requires a different kind of courage. It is not easy to face someone who is armed when you are unarmed. That war is not over but there has been progress. The Southern Poverty Law Center lists 40 civil rights citizens killed in the fray, they too paid with their lives.

What would happen if millions of Americans were courageous enough to take the path of non-violence? What if we applied the military-half of our national budget to confronting the ills of the world with a ministry of love—with a dream that when North and South, “when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

*Free at last! Free at last!  
Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"*

John Martin Ramsay