

# De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy

The Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation (WWFOR) invites people to use various nonviolent informal and decentralized methods at grassroots and larger levels to:

- **DEBUNK** the **ASSUMPTION** that military violence is a legitimate way to solve problems.
- **UNDERMINE** the **MILITARISM** in **U.S. CULTURE AND POLITICAL LIFE** and
- **DE-MILITARIZE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

The Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation (WWFOR, [www.wwfor.org](http://www.wwfor.org)) – a longstanding multi-issue peace and justice organization grounded in principled nonviolence and grassroots organizing – created an **Issue and Activity Group (IAG)** to help people work on this. WWFOR offers some kinds of support, including these:

- An e-mail listserv (sign up at [demilitarize@wwfor.org](mailto:demilitarize@wwfor.org)) lets us share ideas, resources, and organizing opportunities
- A “**De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy**” part of the “**PROJECTS**” drop-down menu tab is on [www.wwfor.org](http://www.wwfor.org)
- Other creative opportunities. Please see the bottom of the next page for other ways to contact us directly.

## Notice the assumptions and the militarization of U.S. culture and political life:

- Politicians keep saying the world needs U.S. leadership. Why assume this? Why do Americans think our government is **entitled** to butt in and use violence against other nations?
- When trouble occurs in another country, the U.S. politicians, news media, and public say we must “do something,” but the **unspoken assumption** is to do something **violent**. Why don’t we hear politicians, media, and the public say the U.S. should practice better listening skills or work collaboratively to find a nonviolent solution that is a “win-win” for everyone, or simply let foreign diplomats handle it without any U.S. meddling?
- Thoughtful people recognize the unconscious assumptions and feelings that come with “white privilege” and “male privilege.” Let’s also recognize the “American privilege” that causes our politicians, news media and public to feel **entitled** to butt into other nations’ internal affairs, demonize them, and militarily attack them.
- Instead of identifying military violence by its true name, our politicians and media use euphemisms. Politicians and media refer to “the use of force,” but refuse to say, “the use of violence” or “killing people.” When I think of “force,” I think of twisting really hard on a stuck lid of a pickle jar. The military does not use “force.” It uses violence. It kills people. Let’s call things by their true names.
- Many people assume and use glib rhetoric that the U.S. military gave us our freedom and continually protects our rights.
- Why do military recruiters get such easy access to schools while people who challenge their sales pitches are denied?
- Why do so many summertime festivals and public events include military bands and military displays? Why don’t peace groups get equal time?
- Why do school history courses focus so much on wars and battles while ignoring history’s many efforts to solve problems by organizing nonviolent activities?

## Yes, we really can change U.S. culture toward de-militarization:

- We have made huge progress in the past few decades in raising environmental awareness and passing laws and regulations, in stopping smoking in public, in supporting LGBTQ equality, in reducing racist and sexist jokes, and even causing people to pick up their dog’s poop from public places. **Yes, grassroots organizing really can change public awareness and attitudes!**
- Likewise, we can figure out many ways to tilt U.S. culture away from its pro-military bias and toward supporting peace!

→ Please turn this page over and start generating alternatives!

Let's challenge the militaristic assumptions, "American privilege," biased language, etc. Let's create and share ideas, resources, opportunities, etc., to build progress from the grassroots up, including small things we can do in our daily lives.

Some of the ideas generated thus far include:

- Visit [www.wwfor.org](http://www.wwfor.org), click "PROJECTS" and click "De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy."
  - Join WWFOR's e-mail listserv to "De-Militarize Foreign Policy." To sign up, send e-mail to [demilitarize@wwfor.org](mailto:demilitarize@wwfor.org). Then you can share ideas, articles (popular and academic), research, workshops, practical action opportunities, information about relevant nonprofit organizations, spiritual and religious opportunities and resources, etc.
  - Write letters to editors and politicians.
  - Comment on online articles.
  - Point out the militaristic assumptions and memes that occur in daily conversations. Offer alternatives.
  - Respond to e-mail messages and surveys from politicians and non-profit organizations. For example, when politicians or non-profit organizations e-mail us to ask which issues to prioritize, we can type alternatives into the "Other" field, urging de-militarizing our foreign policy so we'll stop antagonizing the rest of the world and stop provoking terrorism, and so we can use the budget savings to meet human needs.
  - When you participate in vigils or rallies for peace or other good issues, make and hold signs with relevant messages, such as "Military 'solutions' make problems worse!" or "War is terrorism with a bigger budget" or "We all share one earth" or "All people are one human family."
  - Let's connect the dots with other issues, including how the U.S.'s violent foreign policy sets a bad example that implies permission for individuals to use violence at interpersonal levels (including gun violence) within the U.S., and how our violent foreign policy against other nations' people of color implies permission for racial oppression within the U.S.
  - We could study available information about nonviolent ways to provide national defense, and share information publicly.
  - Find ways to lift up peace values and undermine militarism while you're doing your day jobs.
- Example #1:** A school teacher taught less about the Revolutionary War battles and more about the nonviolent ways the American colonists were resisting British oppression.
- Example #2:** A high school guidance counselor moved military recruitment materials to a less visible area and non-military materials to a more visible area.
- We could connect with non-profit organizations doing "counter-recruiting" and share their information and strategies with young people so they'll be able to learn the truth about military service, counter the recruiters' deceptions, and find other ways to meet occupational, educational and personal needs.
  - Elementary and secondary schools can create student-based peer-mediation programs and train students to nonviolently mediate conflicts among students. When students learn how to solve conflicts without fighting, they will grow up knowing that there are better alternatives than military violence.
  - Watch the Olympia FOR's October 2016 TV program through [www.olympiafor.org](http://www.olympiafor.org). Simply click the "TV Programs" link and scroll down to October 2016. Click the link to watch the program or the .pdf link next to it for a written summary, and/or another link for a workshop handout (same as below).
  - Visit [www.olympiafor.org](http://www.olympiafor.org), click the "Issues" link, and click the .pdf document titled, "De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy -- WORKSHOP Handout." Print it out and self-administer this workshop and/or share it with friends. It shows how the U.S.'s militaristic foreign policy makes problems worse and offers insights for changing to peaceful alternatives.
  - We can monitor the words used by politicians and media, and correct their implicit bias. For example, in the 1980s when a group of us met with our U.S. House member to urge him to cut military spending, he kept referring to "the defense budget," but each time he did that I interrupted him and said, "It's not really defense; it's the **military** budget." I did this about 5 or 6 times during our meeting. Let's challenge any mention of "defense" and "national security" and the mistaken notion that the U.S. military protects our freedom and rights.
  - How could we use existing models and methodologies (e.g., Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication) to understand and counter militaristic thinking and behavior?
  - See [www.wwfor.org](http://www.wwfor.org) to connect with Western Washington FOR's new "De-Militarize Foreign Policy" activities and to sign up for our listserv. (See information below.)

What else do you think would help us shift the U.S.'s culture toward de-militarizing our foreign policy?

WWFOR invites you to join this effort to **De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy.**

To see info and resources, visit [www.wwfor.org](http://www.wwfor.org), click **PROJECTS**, and then click "**De-Militarize U.S. Foreign Policy.**"

To join our e-mail listserv, send an e-mail to [demilitarize@wwfor.org](mailto:demilitarize@wwfor.org)

Questions? More ideas? Contact Glen Anderson (360) 491-9093 [glenanderson@integra.net](mailto:glenanderson@integra.net) Updated to October 6, 2016