

I'm Mad as Hell and I'm Not Going To Take This Anymore

Michael Orange, Veterans For Peace

Walk for Planet Peace, Minnesota State Capitol, September 21, 2019

"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not gonna' take this anymore!" This is the famous rant from the 1976 movie, "Network."

I'm mad as hell about our country's inaction to battle climate change. This science denial is a crime against humanity. I'm mad as hell about the incremental march towards fascism happening in so many parts of the world, including our country. I'm mad as hell that the Trump Administration and its elected sycophants in Congress are waging war on immigrants, on women's reproductive rights, and on racial and gender minorities. And I'm mad as hell about rampant economic inequity, the greed and corruption of the corporate elite, and how so many elected leaders cower before the insane policies of the NRA.

Anger is a natural human response to the insanity of today's upside-down, Bizarro World. But anger turned inward can lead to anxiety or paralysis (which is the goal of the Trump Administration). The antidote is to channel our anger into non-violent activism. That's what today's march is about.

History teaches us that progressive change only happens when the people rise up and demand it. But it takes sustained commitments from each of us.

Members of my group, Veterans For Peace, live that sustained commitment. We all responded to the call to serve our country, and have continued to serve in the cause for peace and justice. Some of our members protested for weeks in sub-zero temps to help protect Native American water rights in North Dakota. Others suffered arrest and prison time for anti-war protests. Some helped build water systems in Iraq. Others worked in Mexico to help US war veterans that the Trump Administration deported. Some joined other peacemakers for the Lake Street Bridge Peace Vigil that has occurred every Wednesday for the past two decades.

I will tell you what drives my core commitment and has sustained it over the past fifty years. Children. I saw what war does to children. Since Vietnam, our modern warfare tactics kill mostly civilians; more than 85% of the war dead are civilians. I saw children literally shredded by our assault rifles. Here at home, active shooter drills now replace the fire drills I remember as a kid. It is outrageous that our country separates children from their families and cages them in what many describe as concentration camps. Inexcusable poverty shrinks their opportunities and shortens their lives, and climate change will have its greatest harm on poor children as they mature.

What will sustain your commitment?

I'll offer one suggestion: Find your mission and stick with it. Expecting visible results in the short term can lead to frustration and apathy. We are all soldiers in this cause, and we must all soldier on regardless of the visible results.

Mahatma Gandhi spoke about this. He said, "You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results."