

# TEN YEARS LATER: WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF TERRORISM?

Michael Sanger, PhD, Valdosta State University

*The psyches of individuals around the world were profoundly changed by the attacks of 9/11/2001 and the events that followed. In the days immediately after 9/11, we felt a sense of unity and caring for others, not only in America but across the globe. But the Bush administration's decision to launch a Global War on Terror (GWOT), and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, changed everything. The GWOT divided the world into warring camps, and it appeared there was little that individuals could do to counter this division. "The Opposite of Terrorism" project began two weeks after 9/11 in an attempt to counter the mindset that leads to both terrorism and the GWOT. This article defines and explores the power of the opposite of terrorism, illustrated by people and organizations exemplifying the concept.*

There is great power in simply asking the question, "What is the opposite of terrorism?" Exploring this question can change our relationship to terrorism. Rather than seeing it as monolithic, incomprehensible, and uncontrollable, we can begin to look at its causes and consequences. Asking the question can lead to answers, and those answers to positive actions. The actions may be external (such as donating blood to the Red Cross) or internal (a more open view of the world). In both cases, these new responses can begin to replace the panic and helplessness that often plague people with a sense of empowerment and hope. I would like to begin this exploration by sharing an excerpt Anne Frank (1995) wrote in her diary on July 15, 1944:

*We're much too young to deal with these problems, but they keep thrusting themselves on us until finally, we're forced to think up a solution, though most of the time our solutions crumble when faced with the facts. It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.*

*And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more. In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I'll be able to realize them!*

My own journey of exploring the opposite of terrorism began two weeks after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, as my friend Marti and I sat at a window table of the Vietnam Georgetown Restaurant in Washington, DC. Through the window we watched people walking down M Street, which turns into Pennsylvania Avenue. The people on the sidewalk would be passing the White House in ten or fifteen minutes, if they walked quickly and if the soldiers manning the barricades across Pennsylvania Avenue let them through. Thinking back to those days, it is somewhat amazing that Marti and I had gotten together to see a movie, have dinner, and talk. That's because two weeks after 9/11 we were still expecting follow-up attacks, and if they were going to come anywhere they were likely coming to DC. The smart thing to do was to buy cases of bottled water and rolls of duct tape, and stay at home cowering in front of the cable news stations. So perhaps going to see a French film that begins with a man pretending to be gay in

order to keep his job and ends with the man and his co-workers discovering their common humanity was not the smartest thing to do. But perhaps that movie was the seed of "The Opposite of Terrorism."

As we ate, our conversation revolved around our families and friends. Neither of us had lost anybody, but we both had people in New York and DC we worried about. Marti and I knew each other through the Shambhala Meditation Center, and our group had been holding regular evening meditation/prayer sessions since the attacks. I had donated blood to the Red Cross and we both had given money to various relief efforts.

Toward the end of dinner, Marti said she wasn't satisfied. She felt we needed to be doing more. President George Bush was preparing to launch his "crusade" against the evil-doers, and to some of us he sounded more like an angry teenager than the leader of the most powerful nation in the world. So we were worried not only by actions Al-Qaeda might take. We also were worried by the actions our government might take, and by the language they were using to frame the situation. That included defining the situations in terms of us versus them, with them "hating us for our freedoms." It also included presenting reality in a dualistic fashion, with us being the innocent victims of attacks by the evil-doers, and them being the not-quite-fully-human "evil-doers." And since those evil-doers were out to get us, the government was out to destroy them by whatever means necessary. Those views are the epitome of terrorism. We were becoming the people we were afraid of.

There was a real fear of a major war breaking out, a fear we felt physically and could see in the faces of those we saw at work, at prayer, and at home. And there was a fear that even if we were not attacked again, the Bush administration's military response would mean more death and destruction for innocent civilians all over the world.

"What can we do?" Marti asked.

I didn't really understand her question.

"What can we do to change the atmosphere? To make a difference?"

I was Marti's meditation instructor, which

means I've been practicing Buddhism longer. That implies that when she has questions, I should have at least some answers. Sometimes I have answers. Sometimes I don't.

I didn't have an answer to her question. What could we do that would make any difference anywhere? What could we do to deal with the fear, hatred, and divisiveness that lay thick in the atmosphere around us? What could we do to help those attacked by terrorists, and those whose suffering was at least part of the motivation for the terrorist acts? What could we do to slow down the escalating spiral of belligerent rhetoric that was coming from the administration and the cable news stations? What could we do to help the small nonprofits whose funding was drying up because all the money was flowing to the Red Cross?

I didn't have an answer, so I did what my meditation instructor had told me to do in situations like this. I waited.

Soon a thought came to me. It really did feel as though the thought "came to me," much more than it felt like I "had the thought." In any case, this was the thought that came:

"We could do the opposite of terrorism."

"What?" Marti asked.

I didn't know what, it wasn't my idea. It just came to me. But I was her meditation instructor, and I was supposed to have answers for her questions. So I said, "What if we were to think about what lies at the heart of terrorism, and do something that is the opposite of that?" It sounded good, but I still didn't know what it meant.

"Like what?"

"Well, terrorists try to scare people, and try to hurt people, and seem to be looking out for their own. They don't care who they hurt. So what if we did something that made people happy and ....."

Another thought came.

"What if we had a party to raise money for one of the nonprofits that need money? And we did it for something that wasn't part of the Shambhala community?"

"A fund-raising party?" She seemed to think it was a good idea, which surprised me. So I nodded.

"Great," she said. "I could have it at my

house, and I could make Iranian rice and some side dishes. And it could be for Miriam's Kitchen."

Miriam's Kitchen is a place in the basement of a Presbyterian church that serves breakfast to homeless men. Jonathon, one of our mutual friends, was a social worker there.

"Are you serious?" I asked.

"Of course," Marti replied.

For me, it had just been an idea. But Marti was going to make it real. "We should give it a name," I suggested. "We can have these once a month, and maybe the idea will grow. We can call them 'First Friday' parties. We'll have them on the first Friday of each month."

And if it hadn't been that there were already a couple of other events called "First Friday," and that nobody had a First Friday open to host or come to a party, that would have been it. So we decided to find another name.

That happened rather by accident, when I was emailing Jonathon, to see if it was okay with the leaders at Miriam's Kitchen for us to have a party. I got tired of writing "the opposite of terrorism party," and said we'll have a T.O.O.T. party (T.O.O.T. being The Opposite Of Terrorism). Jonathon liked the name and it stuck. One of the neat things about calling them T.O.O.T. parties is that it was kind of funny, and if there was one thing we needed in those days, it was a sense of humor.

We scheduled the party at Marti's house, and about 30 folks showed up. We raised enough money to buy food for two days of breakfast for 150 homeless men. Then we had a party in the garden apartment where I lived. Almost everybody in my apartment building pitched in as if it were a block party. The next month a friend hosted a party at her house for City at Peace—a multiracial, multicultural group of teenagers using drama to tell stories about, and improve the skills for dealing with, conflict in their lives. My mother and father (a career Army officer) hosted a party at their house. Each party spawned another, and the last one was held in an upscale bar-restaurant and raised almost \$40,000 for suicide prevention.

My strongest memory from these parties is sitting on a couch with Marti at my folk's

house, as the guests started arriving. We looked at each other, smiled, and said "This is really good." The basic feeling that marked each of these parties was that something good was going on. It was the combination of the good intentions of the host; the good intentions of the nonprofit that was going to receive the donations; the good intentions of the guests who were donating money; and the general sense of celebration. The events almost had the feeling of a graduation party, or a wedding reception or bar mitzvah.

These parties were the most obvious result of asking the question "What is the opposite of terrorism?" But there were other, more subtle results. Asking the question had two other effects. First, it reduced "terrorism" from some monolithic entity that only the government could deal with, and against which the individual was left powerless. Asking the question helped break terrorism down into its component parts, each of which can be dealt with on its own. This is not to say that terrorism was removed as a national threat, but at least we realized that reaction to terrorism could be changed from a personal obsession into a personal concern. And that can make a huge difference in how we can live as individuals in the world.

Second, it led us to discover actions that we could take that countered the effects of the terrorist attacks. The parties provided a sense of community, security, meaning, and helpfulness at a time many of us were feeling isolated, frightened, confused, powerless, and helpless.

As the parties flourished people began to ask, "What is the opposite of terrorism, beyond just having the parties?" The more we broached the question, the more we discovered many people who had responded to the trauma of 9/11 in creative, proactive, positive ways. Rather than being beaten down by the terrorist attacks, they were responding in ways that let them hold their heads higher. For example, a man began a website to support others who, like him, were grieving loved ones killed when the plane crashed into the Pentagon. In Iowa City, a class of second graders decided that each student would raise one dollar a week for three weeks. This was a

lot of money for eight-year-old kids, and they certainly felt proud, empowered, and part of a greater community as a result of their gifts.

These people often didn't make the news -- it wasn't as exciting to have a lead story about a second-grade class in Iowa donating their dessert money to the Firefighter's Fund than to interview an expert on bioterrorism. So while these uplifting stories were often lost in the war hysteria, the impacts of their actions were profound—for themselves and for others. We also realized that many people had been doing similar things for years. Some of their stories will be shared in the following pages, as examples of how to provide hope, help, and the possibility of personal transformation to others show us how to fulfill our desire to be angels and heroes ourselves.

But that still left the question, "What is the opposite of terrorism?" We found it challenging to go beyond citing examples and to discover something that was more like a definition. We knew what the opposite of terrorism wasn't. It wasn't feeling frightened, powerless or hateful. It wasn't trying to protect ourselves by killing those we feared. It wasn't waging a Global War on Terrorism or launching a crusade to destroy the evil-doers. But what was it?

It is clear that not all questions have a single answer. For example, while "What is the capital of North Dakota?" has a single answer, the question "What numbers add up to 20?" has many: 1 and 19, 2 and 18, 1 and 2 and 17, 1 and 2 and 3 and 14, -20 and 40. In a similar way, there are many good and useful answers to the question "What are the opposites of terrorism?" After pondering the similarities between the many people and organizations that doing what we saw as opposites of terrorism, we answered the question for ourselves by settling on three central themes:

- Waging peace,
- Seeing what it is, and
- Practicing true kindness
- The following pages will explore each theme, and you might notice that many of the following examples combine several themes.

### Waging Peace

From our point of view, terrorism is a tactic of warfare based on creating fear in the terrorists' enemies with no concern for the loss of "innocent" lives. It is a way of solving the problems that concern them through the unbridled use of force. By contrast, "waging peace" can be thought of as recognizing a problem, and finding creative, life-affirming ways to solve it. As an example of the contrasting approaches, Gandhi believed that using violence to fight oppression was not only wrong, but a mistake. This is because violent responses to oppression fueled the prejudices and fears that lead to oppression. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree," he wrote in 1909, "and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. . . We reap exactly as we sow." (Gandhi, 1962, p. 51)

Using this approach, if you want a kind world, you have to use means that are kind. If you want a world of understanding, you move toward it by using understanding, not shouting. This is why Gandhi, and, later Martin Luther King, stressed nonviolent resistance in their struggles against oppression. It may be why in both Vietnam and Iraq, the American military attempted, with limited success, to win "the hearts and minds" of the civilians in those countries. As President Johnson (1965) said in a speech, "...the ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and the minds of the people who actually live out there. By helping to bring them hope and electricity you are also striking a very important blow for the cause of freedom throughout the world."

You and I may not be interested in winning the hearts of minds of a nation, but we could be interested in waging peace—finding creative and life-affirming solutions to difficult problems. In doing so, it might be well to recall Gandhi's observation that "The means are the ends in the making."

There are many examples of waging peace in the realm of conflicts, and here are a few. One of my favorite instances was my sister telling her children, each of whom was pointing fingers and blaming the other for whatever they had done wrong, "Go to your

room and come down when you have a story you can both agree.” This was a creative solution to a problem, where the means created the end she sought—the children coming together. Waging peace can also be seen in one of groups for which we held a T.O.O.T. party, City at Peace—a group of teenagers using drama to tell the stories of and improve their skills for dealing with conflict in their lives. At a more macro level, a striking example of waging peace can be seen by noting the huge difference between standard nonviolent protests such as labor strikes and political demonstrations, versus the practice of nonviolence as exemplified by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Their intention was to win the hearts of those they were opposing rather than just win a political victory. In so doing, they sought to create a greater community that transcended and included opposing ideals and parties.

The oldest, and to me one of the most useful, examples of waging peace is the concept of “taking whole,” which comes from the eighth-century classic by Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (2005). In his third chapter he presents an idea that can be applied to daily life as well as to warfare between countries:

*In the practice of the art of war, it is best to take the enemy's country whole and intact. To shatter and destroy his country is inferior to this way.*

*So, too, it is better to capture an army intact than to destroy it, better to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company intact than to destroy them.*

*Hence to fight and win in all your battles is not the foremost excellence; to break the enemy's resistance without fighting is the foremost excellence.*

Commentaries on this text suggest that in order to “take the enemy’s country whole and intact,” one has to understand the enemy from the inside out. You have to know the enemy as well as you know yourself. I think of this in conjunction with the hero of *Ender's Game* (Card, 1994), a child commander who defeats a vastly superior force by fully

understanding that force. In the book, Ender does not realize that he is fighting an actual enemy; he thinks he is playing an advanced computer simulation. This is because his superiors knew that once he understood his “enemy” well enough to defeat them, he would not have the heart to do so.

In my own life I apply a version of “taking whole” with my friends and colleagues. When we disagree about something, rather than trying to “shatter and destroy” their arguments we try to understand not only their words but the thoughts behind those arguments. In the process, I often change my own view of the situation, and sometimes we find a creative solution that works for both of us.

Beyond knowing how to deal with conflict, waging peace also means reducing or avoiding conflict by removing what feeds it. In our view, terrorists are actually trying to accomplish something through their actions: they are trying to solve some problem. Thus another aspect of “waging peace” is finding creative ways to address those factors that often lead to conflict—factors such as hunger, hopelessness, and intolerance. For example, OXFAM helps villages in developing countries create the infrastructure they need to grow and prosper, like building a safe drinking water system for a town in India. Doctors Without Borders provides doctor and nurse volunteers to provide urgent medical care to victims of war and disaster regardless of race, religion, or politics. Amnesty International is a global movement of more than three million supporters, independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest, or religion, which campaigns to end grave abuses of human rights. Finally, the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Tolerance* Program provides resources for parents and educators to assist them in teaching about and living lives that respect differences and celebrate diversity.

In these examples of waging peace, we focused on actions, but not the world-view or motivations that lay behind those actions. The next two themes, “seeing what is” and “practicing true kindness,” are opposites of the world view and motivations of terrorists. The first of these is an overly simplistic world

view that assumes how the terrorists see the world is how the world actually is. The second is devaluing those who are not in the terrorist's camp. We will explore the opposites to both of these in the next sections, and you may notice some of the examples look much like waging peace.

### Seeing What Is

Terrorists believe that their view of things is the single correct view, and thus they have no need to consider other, divergent viewpoints. The opposite is recognizing there are many valid ways to view the world, rather than believing that there is one and only one truth, and that you possess it.

Evidence suggests that terrorists hold a dogmatic view of reality (Rosenthal & Muller, 2007); they are sure they possess the one and only truth. Their view of the world is correct, and all other views are wrong. The opposite of this is the second central theme -- seeing the world as it is, rather than just seeing our version of the world.

It might seem strange to claim "seeing what is" as the opposite of holding dogmatic views. One could claim that holding a variety of views, or being open-minded, is the opposite of being dogmatic. And it would be hard to argue against that, especially since we've already noted that both  $19 + 1$  and  $10 + 10$  are both equal to 20. But I believe that "seeing what is" is a stronger opposite than being open-minded.

Part of "seeing what is" consists of recognizing. I emphasize this when teaching introductory social work courses, using the idea of "social construction of reality" to help students realize that how we think things are is just how we think things are. It is not how they really are.

One aspect of "seeing things as they are" is that those things can be internal or external -- they can be a thought or an airplane. A second aspect is that by seeing things as they are, we gain the ability to see them without judging them. "Without judging them" means that we become aware of how we judge things, ideas, or people, and then let the judging mind go.

There seems to be a transformative power that exists in the world, a power that is called

into play whenever we simply observe things as they are. Somehow, and I have no idea what the mechanism is, when we look at things and really see them, when we bring things into awareness and let them rest without trying to change them, something good happens.

When we see things as they are, we realize that no one individual or group has cornered the market on truth. No single "truth" is unequivocal or indivisible; not everything can be viewed through the lenses of that truth. Further, we might also realize that "we" are not always the good guys, and "they" are not always the "Great Satan." Once we see that both "we" and "they" have aspects of good and bad, we see further the unity underneath all the differences. Other benefits that arise from "seeing things as they are" include

- Seeing that we are all interconnected, or in the words of the song—we are family.
- Breaking us out of our mental prison of helplessness and meaninglessness.
- In relation to traumatic events, such as those of 9/11, seeing things as they are, not as we are afraid they are. This helps us shift from an obsession with the dangers of the world to a more realistic appraisal of what there is to fear and what there is not to fear.
- Appreciating people for their actual qualities, and not viewing them only as members of some "group" or how they impact or reflect on us.
- Learning to recognize our own prejudices and how to overcome them.
- Continuing to see after we "blink." We don't look away, and we don't immediately cover over "what is" with our thoughts about it. We must be willing to make contact with the world as it is, which can be beautiful but also painful. If we can't bear to see the suffering in the world, then we might be able to look at why we can't bear it. If we notice we don't want to pay attention to our spouse or lover or friend, we can pay attention to the fact that we don't want to pay attention.
- We begin to see the world as a rainbow.

That last one probably needs a translation, and the best I can do is tell you a story.

Joanne was one of the people who first

started helping to host the T.O.O.T. parties, and she and I were working on a book called *Meditations on The Opposite of Terrorism*. The book contained some of the ideas shared in this article, but also included a discussion about opposites. In particular, we had written that terrorists saw the world in terms of opposites: good and evil, us and them, black and white. The problem was that while we argued this was a bad thing to do, we were writing a whole book based on looking at opposites. So we got into the question of "What is the opposite of opposites?" This really had us stumped for a while. Once we realized there was a problem, even if it was only a conceptual problem, we were stymied.

Then one evening, after dinner, the answer came to me.

"What's the opposite of black?" I asked her.

"White," she replied -- a little hesitation in voice since she could tell by my grin I was on to something.

"Then what is the opposite of black and white?"

She frowned, not at all happy about being on the receiving end of one my strange riddles. "What?" she asked.

"Come on," says I. "What's the opposite of black and white?"

"Grey?"

That surprised me. I hadn't thought of that. "Could be, but grey is sort of in between black and white. What's the opposite of 'black and white'?"

She struggled with it for a little while, but I had this feeling she was getting ready to throw a pillow at my head, so I told her.

"The opposite of 'black and white' is a rainbow."

She smiled. I guess she liked it.

The point of this story is that if we look at the world in terms of black and white, we are limiting ourselves. It may not be the first step on the road to becoming terrorists, but it certainly limits how we can see things. If we realize that we can actually look at the world and not only see the blacks and whites and greys, but also all the colors of the universe—we are opening ourselves to a much wider, richer world. And in this world it is far easier

to find, appreciate, and manifest the opposites of terrorism.

### Kindness

Seeing what is was presented as the opposite of holding an overly simple, dogmatic view of the world that disregards opposing opinions. But having a simple, dogmatic view—in and of itself—is not sufficient to create a terrorist. There must also be a strong sense of "us versus them" with "us" being all good and "them" being the essence of evil. The terrorist knows that God is on his side, and that those on the other side are pawns of the Great Satan. The opposite of this view is what we call "practicing true kindness." Kindness in this sense goes beyond just "being nice." Kindness has the same Old English root as "kin," and thus "true kindness" includes a sense of kinship with others. Rather than seeing the world divided into "us versus them," we can see the world as an extended family. We might have an uncle we don't like, or a sister that drives us crazy, but they are still family.

In this sense being kind can be viewed as being the opposite of being "self"-centered, where self can be my group, my race, my nation, or me. Being kind breaks down the barrier between "us" and "them"—the barrier that is one of the hallmarks of terrorism. This barrier can divide me from the rest of the world, or my group from other groups (e.g., whites vs. blacks), or my nation against another nation (USA vs. Iraq), or my religious group against another religious group (Lutherans vs. Baptists). Kindness is based on taking care of others, and so it means reaching across some divide, to the other side.

Martin Buber (1970) reflected this opposite with his idea of "I-thou" and "I-it" relationships. In an I-it relation, the other is seen as an object that we only relate to in how it impacts us. In an I-thou relationship the other is honored for who or what it is. When we take an I-thou stance we are relating to others as if they were family, and possibly more. In order to really honor something for what it is, we have to actually see it as it is, not see it filtered through our self-interests or preconceptions.

An idea related to practicing true kindness is that of expanding circles of concern. Your circle of concern contains those about whom you are really concerned, about, whom you really care. A sociopath's circle of concern consists only of himself. For most of us, our circles contain our friends, families, and possibly some of our neighbors. Our circle of concern might also include those who share our basic beliefs, who share our religion, ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. Mother Teresa's circle of concern expanded to the poor of Calcutta. Gandhi and the Tibetan monks and nuns imprisoned in China hold in their circle of concern those who would oppress them.

- A central aspect of circles of concern is that there are those inside the circle, for whom we care, and those outside the circle. Thus one of the opposites of terrorism is to expand your circle of concern to include some of those people you might tend to exclude. The following is a list of some people who are practicing true kindness. Many of these are also examples of waging peace, and some illustrate seeing things as they are.
- Acts of kindness might take great bravery, such as historical acts of simple generosity that were later viewed as great heroism. The secretary of Otto Frank, for example, spontaneously said "yes" to his request to help hide him and his family in July of 1942. For the next two years, eight Jews were spared from what would have been certain death. Though we tend to think of Anne Frank as the hero of this story, we should remember those who protected her and others like her as long as they could. A more recent example is the firemen rushing into the burning towers on 9/11.
- A related example is the story of the father who stood up to people who were making racist remarks in a restaurant where he was eating with his daughter. Because they laughed at him, the father felt he'd failed—until he overheard the daughter telling a friend how proud she was of him for standing up to that bully.

- In contrast, other acts of kindness seem almost commonplace, such as offering something as simple as directions to someone in our hometown who is looking at a map and seems lost. The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation is a group devoted to spreading the idea of doing simple acts of kindness that often cost us little or nothing. Other acts are simple, but take more effort, like Olga's project. Olga is the wife of a career Army officer, and a retired musician and music teacher who loved to knit, but had made all the sweaters her girls and their kids could ever use. So she started buying used sweaters at local thrift stores, cleaning and fixing them "like new," and then shipping them at her own expense to a Native American reservation in upstate New York. She is extending her kindness from her immediate family to those she doesn't personally know, but who can certainly use the gifts she offers.
- In addition to providing for the physical needs of others, some practice true kindness by addressing their psycho-social needs. In the political realm, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave us the platinum standard of providing psychological comfort when he said in his first inaugural address, "We have nothing to fear, but fear itself."
- Mrs. R. practiced true kindness. She was a foster mother to at least 20 children. She saw a problem and did her best to address it, not by attacking some external evil "other" who caused the problem, but by taking care of at-risk children who needed her care.
- Not everyone is going to play by the rules, so we need the armed services, and the unarmed services such as child protective services, Amnesty International, and even school crossing guards. We might not think of them as practicing true kindness, but if you look at the circle of concern for a social worker, a police officer, or a member of the National Guard, it makes sense.

#### **Ten Year Later, and Now What?**

So here we are, ten years after the attacks that made terrorism and the threat of terrorism real to many Americans. One might question,



“What is the practical use of these opposites so long after 9/11?”

The fact is, fallout from terrorism is still with us. We still live in a world that is dominated, perhaps not by terrorism, but by the roots of terrorism: using violence to solve problems, seeing the world in a dogmatic simplistic way, and devaluing those you see as “other.” These can be seen in our current national and international politics. There are still people who need protection, nurturing, and simple kindness. There are still problems facing us, as individuals and as a society. Hunger, global warming, natural disasters, and poverty are still with us. Fear and the devaluing of those who are not “like us” still exist on the international, national, and personal level.

As Anne Frank’s writing suggests, it is easy to despair. But we can use the opposites not only to deal with the threat of terrorism, but with all these other challenges.

This is what I believe is important: that we realize that we can change the way we think about the world. Going a step further, by thinking about our relationship to the world as the possibility of creating the opposites of terrorism and then acting on those thoughts, we can create a world that is better for ourselves and those we care about. Still, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the immensity of the suffering in the world. To counter this tendency to get overwhelmed by the size of the problems we face today, we might recall a little history

In 1966, when apartheid was a fact of life in South Africa—a fact as solid as rock -- Robert Kennedy (1966) visited the country. He said “Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” And look at what happened: apartheid was eventually abolished, the result of lots of “small” actions joining together into a tidal wave.

Until the Soviet Union collapsed, we thought it was here to stay. Until Rosa Parks

sat down in the front of the bus, Jim Crow was “just the way it was.” As a feisty grandmother in the Midwest was fond of saying, “*Can’t never did anything.*”

### Coda

Part of asking the question, “What is The Opposite of Terrorism?” was realizing we had to go beyond the idea of opposites. As you came to the end of this article, you might have expected to find “the answer,” just like one expects to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But a rainbow doesn’t end: seen from the earth, it certainly appears to have two distinct ends, each touching the horizon. But seen from an airplane, it is a circle, and how it looks depends on the interplay of atmospheric moisture, light from the sun, and who is viewing it and from what position. Just as no two people see the same rainbow, what’s important is not “the answers” we come to, but the questions that arise in our minds.

In writing this article, I presented problems and solutions. There are still many unanswered questions:

- How can we contribute to the world while we continue to work at our jobs and raise our families?
- How do we deal with those who hate us—what does it mean to turn the other cheek in a time of hate and fear?
- How can we transcend our differences with those who don’t seem to want to transcend theirs?

In the final analysis, each of us must answer the questions for ourselves. And all must determine what choice to make with the answers they find.

This article began with a quote from Anne Frank and I would like to close this article with the following short story, versions of which are found in many folk traditions.

*Once there was a very wise old woman, who could solve any problem any one brought to her. And she could also answer any question she was asked. While most people respected and honored her, some were always trying to stump her.*

*One day a clever young boy caught a small sparrow, and gathered his friends around him.*

*"We will go to the old lady, and I will hold the bird in my hands behind my back. We will ask her if the bird is dead or alive. If she says it is dead, I will let it go. If she says it is alive, I will crush it."*

*His friends all thought this was terribly clever, and they all rushed to the old lady's house.*

*She came to the door, and the clever young boy said: "I have a bird in my hands behind my back. It is dead or alive?"*

*The old lady thought a bit, and then she smiled.*

*"It's in your hands," she replied.*

It's in your hands.

**Contact:**

**Michael Sanger, PhD**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Division of Social Work**  
**Valdosta State University**  
**Valdosta, GA**  
**msanger@valodsta.edu**

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