



## Alice Walker

**Why War Is Never a Good Idea**  
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### 1. What inspired you to write *Why War Is Never a Good Idea*?

I was distressed that after 9/11, when the United States was attacked by terrorists, the United States' response was to attack Afghanistan, where some of the terrorists had been. When researching the situation in Afghanistan, I learned there were already 700,000 disabled orphans, nearly as many as the population of San Francisco, a city I see every day from my window, across the Bay. These children would be unable to move out of the way of the huge bombs the U.S. government was planning to drop on them and their country. Many of them were blind, having been wounded already in the many assaults on Afghanistan by various foreign powers and by Afghani warlords over the years. The pain I felt at their condition was almost beyond bearing, especially because I knew my tax dollars (along with the tax dollars of millions of Americans) would be used to finance their terror and

destruction. Originally the dedication was: a picture book for children blinded by war.

### 2. As a Pulitzer Prize winner and renowned activist, why did you choose to share your message through an illustrated children's picture book, rather than concentrating purely on adults?

As an elder of the Americas and of the rest of the planet, it is my responsibility to care for and protect, to the best of my ability, the young. The young are not protected and cared for when we don't share with them, from an early age, the reality of war. That it is exceedingly dangerous and often lethal. That the game of war that most children are permitted to indulge in sets them up to believe war itself is make-believe. That it is inevitable. That the deaths that can occur in war are not real deaths. We must, I believe, start teaching our children the sanity of nonviolence much earlier. It is an outrage against the child that he or she is kept innocent of what goes on in war until it is time to be sent to an unknown area to fight. Approached with gentleness toward the sensitive heart of the child, and shared with patience and love, the story of war's devastation can be accepted by quite young children with thoughtfulness and conscious consideration.

### 3. War is of global concern in this day and age. In what ways do you think young people can impact decisions about war?

War contributes greatly to global warming, which shouldn't surprise us. All those bombs going off, all those rockets, all those planes and helicopters. All that fuel of various kinds being used. It pollutes the air and water of this very fragile and interconnected planet. I live on the West Coast of the United States, and yet the air that I breathe is sometimes the same air that was being breathed in China the day before. There is no new water on the planet at all, either. Everything is recycled. This means we cannot bomb anyone, anywhere on earth, without having some of the bomb fall on us, whether in the form of radioactive dust or carcinogenic fumes or unknown chemicals traveling silently through our water systems. The young of today will inherit the planet as we leave it. They can help take better care of it by becoming aware of the futility of harming or destroying any part of it.

### 4. In addition to war, what is the second largest global concern that you believe young people will be faced with in the future?

Overpopulation by humans. It is crucial that young people are taught sustainable child production and rearing. The earth is buckling under our weight, and it is becoming clear that millions of children are not being cared for at all, whether because of war, famine, or disease. Real leadership in the world would mean presenting our situation with clarity and compassion and impressing upon children the need to be more generous about the children who already exist and more cautious about bringing new children to the planet until some of our crisis situations have been resolved. I consider the fact that thousands of children die each day from starvation and a lack of medicine a crisis for humanity and a problem we must collectively attempt to solve.

### 5. Can you share any information with us about what you are currently working on?

I am transcribing forty years of journals. These are journals that go back very far. One was given to me when I went on a peace pilgrimage to the former Soviet Union at the age of eighteen. It was the year after my freshman year at Spelman College in Atlanta (which I attended for two years before going to Sarah Lawrence). Except for a couple of trips to Cleveland--where an aunt lived--and Boston--where I worked summers--I had never traveled beyond my home state of Georgia: All I knew was that my government talked a lot about bombing the Russian people and I knew I had no quarrel with them.

It has always seemed intelligent to me to talk to other people. People can outlive a conversation, even a difficult one; they cannot outlive being bombed or starved to death. I liked the Russians, liked their furry hats! Liked St. Basil's Cathedral and its onion--like turrets and spires. But most of all, I fell in love with the earth there; the same earth I knew at home. How magical this seemed to me. That people were people; air was air; water was water; dirt, dirt; the sun, the sun; the moon, the moon; a smile, a smile; anywhere on earth.

Perhaps it is just this sense of the wonder and oneness of creation that I want the young to share.