

they're fighting. The soldiers are mostly in their teens, I pointed out. Why would we expect them to evaluate U.S. foreign policy?

The host had made the classic error of thinking that war belongs to the soldiers who fight it. That is a standard of accountability not applied to, say, oil-rig workers or police. The environment is collapsing and anti-crime measures can be deeply flawed, but we don't expect people in those fields to discuss national policy on their lunch breaks.

Soldiers, though, are a special case. Perhaps war is so obscene that even the people who supported it don't want to hear the details or acknowledge their role. Soldiers face myriad challenges when they return home, but one of the most destructive is the sense that their country doesn't quite realize that it—and not just the soldiers—went to war. The country approved, financed and justified war—and sent the soldiers to fight it. This is important because it returns the moral burden of war to its rightful place: with the entire nation. If a soldier inadvertently kills a civilian in Baghdad, we all helped kill that civilian. If a soldier loses his arm in Afghanistan, we all lost something.

The growing cultural gap between American society and our military is dangerous and unhealthy. The sense that war belongs exclusively to the soldiers and generals may be one of the most destructive expressions of this gap. Both sides are to blame. I know many soldiers who don't want to be called heroes—a grotesquely misused word—or told that they did their duty; some don't want to be thanked. Soldiers know all too well how much killing—mostly of civilians—goes on in war. Congratulations make them feel that people back home have no idea what happens when a human body encounters the machinery of war.

I am no pacifist. I'm glad the police in my home town of New York carry guns, and every war I have ever covered as a journalist has been ended by armed Western intervention. I approved of all of it, including our entry into Afghanistan. (In 2001, U.S. forces effectively ended a civil war that had killed as many as 400,000 Afghans during the previous decade and forced the exodus of millions more. The situation there today is the lowest level of civilian suffering in Afghanistan in 30 years.) But the obscenity of war is not diminished when that conflict is righteous or necessary or noble. And when soldiers come home spiritually polluted by the killing that they committed, or even just witnessed, many hope that their country will share the moral responsibility of such a grave event.

Their country doesn't. Liberals often say that it's not their problem because they opposed the war. Conservatives tend to call soldiers "heroes" and pat them on the back. Neither response is honest or helpful. Neither addresses the epidemic of post-traumatic stress disorder afflicting our veterans. Rates of suicide, alcoholism, fatal car accidents and incarceration are far higher for veterans than for most of the civilian population. One study predicted that in the next decade 400,000 to 500,000 veterans will have criminal cases in the courts. Our collective avoidance of this problem is unjust and hypocritical. It is also going to be very costly.

Civilians tend to do things that make them, not the veterans, feel better. Yellow ribbons and parades do little to help with the emotional aftermath of combat. War has been part of human culture for tens of thousands of years, and most tribal societies were engaged in some form of warfare when encountered by Western explorers. It might be productive to study how some societies re-integrated their young fighters after the intimate carnage of Stone Age combat. It is

striking, in fact, how rarely combat trauma is mentioned in ethnographic studies of cultures.

Typically, warriors were welcomed home by their entire community and underwent rituals to spiritually cleanse them of the effect of killing. Otherwise, they were considered too polluted to be around women and children. Often there was a celebration in which the fighters described the battle in great, bloody detail. Every man knew he was fighting for his community, and every person in the community knew that their lives depended on these young men. These gatherings must have been enormously cathartic for both the fighters and the people they were defending. A question like the one recently posed to me wouldn't begin to make sense in a culture such as the Yanomami of Brazil and Venezuela or the Comanche.

Our enormously complex society can't just start performing tribal rituals designed to diminish combat trauma, but there may be things we can do. The therapeutic power of storytelling, for example, could give combat veterans an emotional outlet and allow civilians to demonstrate their personal involvement. On Memorial Day or Veterans Day, in addition to traditional parades, communities could make their city or town hall available for vets to tell their stories. Each could get, say, 10 minutes to tell his or her experience at war.

Attendance could not be mandatory, but on that day "I support the troops" would mean spending hours listening to our vets. We would hear a lot of anger and pain. We would also hear a lot of pride. Some of what would be said would make you uncomfortable, whether you are liberal or conservative, military or nonmilitary, young or old. But there is no point in having a conversation about war that is not completely honest.

Let them speak. They deserve it. In addition to getting our veterans back, we might get our nation back as well.

#### TRIBUTE TO SARAH CURTIS

### HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 4, 2013*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to interact with some of the brightest students in the 22nd Congressional District who serve on my Congressional Youth Advisory Council. I have gained much by listening to the high school students who are the future of this great nation. They provide important insight into the concerns of our younger constituents and hopefully get a better sense of the importance of being an active participant in the political process. Many of the students have written short essays on a variety of topics and I am pleased to share these with my House colleagues.

Sarah Curtis is a junior at George Ranch High School in Fort Bend County, Texas. Her essay topic is: Select an important event that has occurred in the past 50 years and explain how that event has changed our country.

Within the past 50 years, our nation has seen great divides socially created by monumental governmental decisions. In the year 1973, the law allowed legal abortions within the United States passed under the court ruling of *Roe v. Wade*. By creating this abominable law that now prohibits state and federal unrecognizing of the law, new corporations

have begun to boom, those such as Planned Parenthood. Morally and ethically wrong, a law that allows the legality of the killing of our unborn is practically manslaughter and an unjust crime against humanity. This court ruling has created such a massive divide within our country that even politics are being decided through this law. Liberals have taken a more pro-choice (proabortion) stance while the conservatives of the U.S. take a more pro-life (against abortion) stand. Even those who see this law as a sacrilegious act against God have recognized the monstrosity situation this has become. Religious leaders, as of recently, have been forced, under Obama Care to offer abortions, even though it goes against everything they morally believe. Our country has been known in the past to be the "promised land" or "the land of the free", but forcing laws down everybody's throats and creating a divide between our own people not exactly unite us united against one cause, but rather against each other for different causes. Because of one court decision 40 years ago, the repercussions are still being dealt with today with the killing of the innocent and unborn being so normal and legal. *Roe v. Wade* may have been a court case about one woman claiming to have been raped, and wanting to legally have an abortion, but she was not raped, and ended up having the child before the case ever appeared in court anyway. So what was the point of one woman's want to not have a child costing our nation nearly 800,000 unborn children per year.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE OUTSTANDING IMPACT THE BALDWIN CENTER HAS MADE ON THE COMMUNITY OF PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

### HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 4, 2013*

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize talented staff and dedicated volunteers of the Baldwin Center in Pontiac, Michigan, for the outstanding work they engage in every day to fulfill its mission to feed, clothe, educate and empower the disadvantaged residents in the Pontiac community.

Like so many great community organizations, the Baldwin Center traces its foundation to people of immense compassion and faith, who have been committed to making a difference in their community. Created as an outreach program of the Baldwin Avenue United Methodist Church in 1981 to respond to increasing need in the community, the Baldwin Center has grown into a multifaceted, comprehensive human service agency that serves thousands annually. The Center's first programs provided children with food and recreation, but quickly expanded to include a soup kitchen, tutoring services and emergency shelter. In 2006, the congregation of Baldwin Avenue moved and the Baldwin Center remained at its current location, becoming a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Over the decades it has served the Greater Pontiac Community, the Baldwin Center has significantly increased both the size and scope of the support it offers to area residents.