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Our world needs peace literacy

In 2013, I met a brilliant thinker, Captain Paul Chappell, author of "The Art of Waging Peace." Younger than our youngest son, Paul's already full-life had him already giving back, so I organized for him to spend a week here talking and teaching.

Chappell grew up in Alabama, son of an African American Korean War veteran and his Korean wife. Intense southern prejudice, coupled with PTSD-driven domestic violence, led to some turbulent school days, where Chappell was saved by a teacher who saw through



LARRY JOHNSON

Guest columnist

Larry Johnson is a Golden Valley Veteran and storyteller. He is the author of "SIXTY-ONE," stories calling for less war, and no more arguing about veteran care, especially mental health and toxin exposure.

his anger, encouraging him in his ability to write. Meanwhile, both parents urged him to serve in the military, as "the only place in America where a black

man can succeed."

After graduating West Point and serving as an officer in Iraq, Chappell merged the best of West Point leadership training with the disciplined non-violence work of folks like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Paul serves as education director for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in California, and at this moment is completing his last and seventh book. Most striking in his early work was the hopeful claim that if hundreds of people could

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work hard for many years to eliminate the legality of slavery, we can do the same with the use of warfare to settle international differences.

Paul was recently here for the fourth time, working with Professor Sharyn Clough of Oregon State University, teaching peace literacy. Clough is helping to translate Chappell's work into a curriculum

which can be utilized in any and all education settings. It teaches skills for overcoming trauma, which we all have, and to move that to combating bullying, racism and terrorism at home or school, as well as in the larger community and the world.

The collection of lesson plans are structured after the old spiritual proverb: If there is peace in the heart, there will be peace in the home. If in the home, then in the community, and if there, finally in

the world.

It is true that many work and advocate for inner peace, but leave mention of the larger world alone. It is also true that too many who advocate passionately for world peace are not so peaceful in their daily lives. I believe the peace literacy curriculum addresses all of this, and as a storyteller, I love to hear Paul's story of being back home at a late night Waffle House, where a drunk "big guy with chains" had a dirty

fork, so walked over and took Paul's. Paul's friend stormed over and screamed, "You can't take his fork. He's a veteran." Then, a potential violent disaster was averted by the force of calm, strategic respect.

The peace literacy curriculum is free to use, in total, or in part, by going to peaceliteracy.org. If you'd like to connect with local training and networking, contact FUS Peace Circle through pat.gottschalk@yahoo.com.