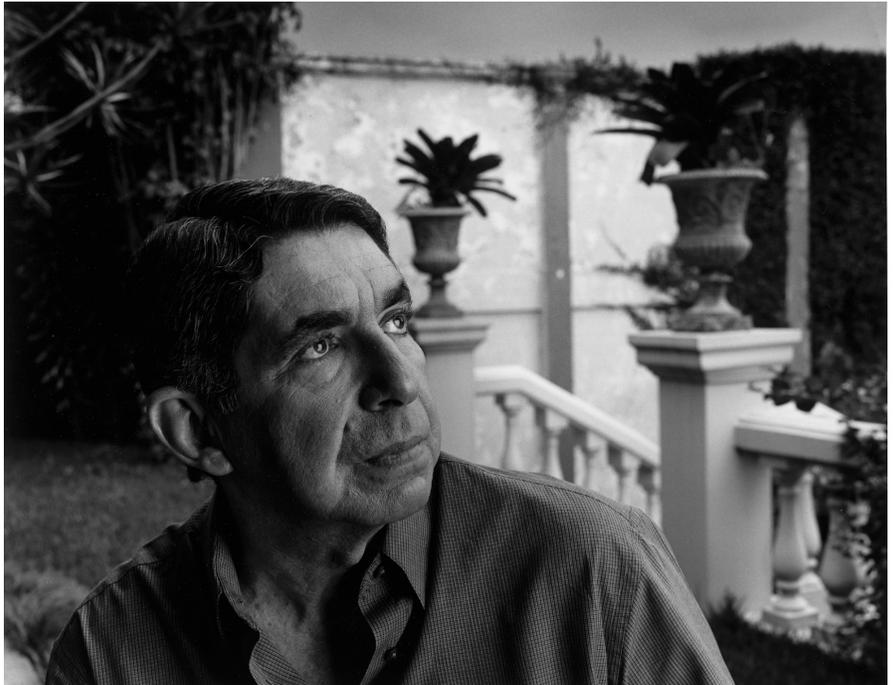


# OSCAR ARIAS SANCHEZ

“WAR, AND THE PREPARATION FOR WAR, ARE THE TWO GREATEST OBSTACLES TO HUMAN PROGRESS, FOSTERING A VICIOUS CYCLE OF ARMS BUILDUPS, VIOLENCE, AND POVERTY.”

War raged throughout Central America. The Sandinistas ruled Nicaragua with Soviet backing, and right-wing military governments fought guerrilla insurgencies in El Salvador and Guatemala, while tensions in Honduras were fueled by millions in military aid from the United States and the USSR. Oscar Arias dared to advocate for peace against these powerful Cold War interests and to broker the Arias Peace Plan, which brought a cessation of fighting to his neighbors and prosperity to his own peaceful country of Costa Rica.

Born in 1940, Arias studied law and economics at the University of Costa Rica and received a doctoral degree at the University of Essex, England. Appointed minister of planning and economic policy in Costa Rica in 1972, he was elected to congress in 1978 and to the presidency in 1986. On the day he was inaugurated, Arias called for an alliance for democracy and social and economic liberty throughout Latin America. In 1987, he drafted the peace plan, which led to the Esquipulus II accords, signed by all the Central American presidents on August 7. In the same year he was named a Nobel laureate for his efforts to promote peace in Central America. Arias has used his considerable moral authority to embark on a worldwide campaign for human development, democracy, and demilitarization, applying the lessons from the Central American peace process to conflicts across the globe. From 2006 until May 2010, President Arias served his second term as president of Costa Rica.



Oscar Arias Sanchez ©Eddie Adams

INTERVIEW TAKEN FROM KERRY KENNEDY'S BOOK *SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER*, 2000

Three billion people live in tragic poverty, and forty thousand children die each day from diseases that could be prevented. In a world that presents such a dramatic struggle between life and death, the decisions we make about how to conduct our lives, about the kind of people we want to be, have important consequences. In this context, I think it is clear that one must stand on the side of life. The fact that working for human security is difficult, or that we might face occasional setbacks, in no way affects this existential decision. One works for justice not for the big victories, but simply because engaging in the struggle is itself worth doing. Globalization is a Janus-faced beast, offering unimaginable prosperity to the most well educated and well born, while doling out only misery and despair to the world's poor. For some, the new economic system means minimizing labor costs and maximizing profits; for many others, it means facing the end of job security, and at the same time witnessing the reappearance of "sweatshops." The most vulnerable and economically insecure populations bear the miserable brunt of the impact of an economic system based on greed and speculation, rather than on human need. While the world as a whole consumes twenty-four trillion dollars worth of goods and services each year, the planet holds 1.3 billion people who live on incomes of less than one dollar a day. The three richest countries in the world have assets that exceed the combined gross domestic product of the poorest forty-eight countries.

The question is not whether you will be involved in the ethical challenges of globalization, but what your contribution will be. Will you, in your apathy, be complicit in the injustices I have described? Or will you, with your action and your example, bolster the ranks of those fighting for human security? Today we must accept the fact that the evils of environmental destruction and human deprivation, of disease and malnutrition, of conspicuous consumption and military buildup, are global problems—problems that affect us all.

Military spending is not merely a consumer excess; instead, it represents a huge perversion in the priorities of our civilization. We're talking about enormous sums of money that could be spent on human development. But also, we're talking about vast investment in instruments of death, in guns and fighters designed to kill people. The creation and proliferation of arms bolsters the power of the military, impedes the process of democratization, destroys economic advances, perpetuates ethnic and territorial conflicts, and creates situations in which even the most basic human rights are endangered. Moreover, we increasingly find that women and children are forced to endure a disproportionate share of the hardships of armed conflict and the poverty it worsens.

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Since the end of the Cold War, many industrialized nations have reduced their defense budgets. As a result, those countries' arms merchants have turned to new clients in the developing world, where the majority of today's conflicts take place. The United States stands out as an extreme case. Currently, the United States is responsible for 44 percent of all weapons sales in the world. And, in the past four years, 85 percent of U.S. arms sales have gone to nondemocratic governments in the developing world.

At the end of 1997, weapons manufactured in the United States were being used in thirty-nine of the world's forty-two ethnic and territorial conflicts. It is unconscionable for a country that believes in democracy and justice to continue allowing arms merchants to reap profits stained in blood. But ironically, vast amounts of taxpayer money goes to support this immoral trade. In 1995 the arms industry received 7.6 billion dollars in federal subsidies—this amounts to a huge welfare payment to wealthy profiteers.

War, and the preparation for war, are the two greatest obstacles to human progress, fostering a vicious cycle of arms buildups, violence, and poverty. In order to understand the true human cost of militarism, as well as the true impact of unregulated arms sales in the world today, we must understand that war is not just an evil act of destruction, it is a missed opportunity for humanitarian investment. It is a crime against every child who calls out for food rather than for guns, and against every mother who demands simple vaccinations rather than million-dollar fighters. Without a doubt, military spending represents the single most significant perversion of global priorities known today, claiming 780 billion dollars in 1997. If we channeled just 5 percent of that figure over the next ten years into antipoverty programs, all of the world's population would enjoy basic social services. Another 5 percent, or forty billion dollars, over ten years would provide all people on this planet with an income above the poverty line for their country.

Military officials simply try to marginalize and downplay disarmament proposals as much as possible. They call these ideas "impractical" and "idealistic." They use backroom political tricks to impede disarmament legislation. And they have a whole array of arguments to rationalize the production and sale of arms. I have worked to advocate an International Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers, a comprehensive international effort to regulate and monitor weapons sales. This agreement demands that any decision to export arms should take into account several characteristics pertaining to the country of final destination. The recipient country must endorse democracy, defined in terms of free and fair elections, the rule of law, and civilian control over the military and security forces. Its government must not engage in gross violations of internationally recognized human rights. The International Code of Conduct would not permit arms sales to any country engaged in armed aggression in violation of international law.

Many say that such a code is impractical—impractical because it puts concern for human life before a free-market drive for profits; impractical because it listens to the poor who are crying out for schools and doctors, rather than the dictators who demand guns and fighters. Yes, in an age of cynicism and greed, all just ideas are considered impractical. You are discouraged if you say that we can live in peace. You are mocked for insisting that we can be more humane. I often question the relationship between the International Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers and the free-market concept of supply and demand. If a country's leaders want arms, some might ask, who are we to say that they shouldn't have them?

This question merits two responses. First, since the end of the Cold War, arms manufacturers have been aggressively promoting sales to the developing world, in order to compensate for the drastic reduction in arms purchases by most industrialized countries. Furthermore,

when we assert that a "nation" desires arms, to whom exactly are we referring? Is the single mother in Indonesia or the street orphan in Egypt pressuring government leaders to buy tanks and missiles? Or is it a dictator—who sees arms purchases as the only way to maintain power? The poor of the world are crying out for schools and doctors, not guns and generals. Another argument to justify the sale of arms is that if one country does not sell arms to a nation that wishes to buy them, someone else will. That is precisely why all arms-selling nations must agree to certain common restrictions. We can no longer say business is business and turn a blind eye to the poverty and oppression caused by arms transfers. Just like slavery and the drug trade, the arms trade reaps profits tainted with blood.

Demilitarization is the goal—and it has proven to be an attainable one. Truly the progress made in Panama and Haiti, to name two countries, give us much reason to hope. The U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989 dissolved that country's armed forces. Subsequently, the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress pushed for the constitutional abolition of Panama's military. We commissioned an opinion poll to gauge the Panamanian people's support for a demobilization process; not surprisingly, the poll found substantial support for such a measure. We also began a public education campaign to promote the value of demilitarization. These efforts, and the resolve of the millions of Panamanians who stood for disarmament, came to fruition in October 1994 when Panama's legislature amended the Constitution to abolish their armed forces.

Similarly, the army of Haiti was in considerable disarray following the U.S.-led interventions in 1994. At this time I encouraged President Aristide to consider demobilizing his armed forces. Meanwhile, many civil society groups held meetings to promote demobilization. The Arias Foundation launched a public opinion poll campaign akin to that of Panama's and documented similar support among the Haitian public for the abolition of their armed forces. In April 1995, Aristide publicly announced his intention to seek the elimination and constitutional abolition of Haiti's armed forces. Then in February 1996, the Haitian Senate presented a resolution stating their intent to pursue the constitutional abolition of Haiti's armed forces.

Courage begins with one voice—look at all the people who have come forward, as individuals and groups, to support the Code of Conduct. Clearly, much work remains to be done. People must continue to organize, so that their voices will be heard. Political leaders must be convinced that demilitarization is a practical and desirable goal. And if they cannot be convinced, then people must elect new representatives. Conviction itself is only talk, but it is important talk, because it motivates action. So while I recognize the hard work of bringing people together in democratic movements, of policy formation, and of diplomacy, I think it is important to affirm that change in consciousness is a crucial first step in making social change—the step from which action grows.

Courage means standing with your values, principles, convictions, and ideals under all circumstances—no matter what. If you stick to your principles, you will often have to confront powerful interests. Having courage means doing this without fear. It means having the courage to change things. I often say that Costa Rica is not now an economic power, but that we want to be some day. Costa Rica is not a military power, and we do not ever want to be. But Costa Rica is already a moral power. This is why we must always be sure to have the courage to do what is right.

# ADVOCATING FOR PEACE BY DISARMAMENT

## OSCAR ARIAS SANCHEZ

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: 9–12  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE:  
DEMILITARIZATION

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

**Article 3:** Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security

**Article 25:** Right to Adequate Living Standard

**Article 26:** Right to Education

### GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Why do countries create militaries?
- How do militaries affect interactions between countries?
- How has our culture affected and triggered militarization?
- Why does violence exist? Why do we need weapons? What is their purpose?
- How do weapons impact human interaction?

### TIME REQUIREMENT:

225 Minutes

### OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of community.
- Explain Oscar Arias Sanchez's definition of Costa Rica as a "moral power."
- Analyze the strengths of moral power in comparison to political or economic power.
- Explain the pros and cons of military spending.

### COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

### VOCABULARY:

- Human rights
- Defender
- Arias Peace Plan
- Esquipulus II Accord
- Disarmament
- Demilitarization
- Sandinistas
- Seville Statement of Peace
- Values
- Priorities

### CONCEPTS:

- Disarmament
- Militarization
- World poverty

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- LCD projector

### MATERIALS:

- Readings on Oscar Arias Sanchez [www.rfkhumanrights.org](http://www.rfkhumanrights.org) / click on **Speak Truth to Power** / click on **"Defenders"** tab
- Large pictures of Oscar Arias Sanchez
- Copies of Nobel Peace Prize nomination form
- Graph of U.S. budget
- List of countries without militaries <http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-countries-without-military-forces.php>
- The Seville Statement of 1986 <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/vita/2011/seville2011.pdf>

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### TEACHER TIPS:

- Introduce the values auction before you talk about Oscar Sanchez.
- Ask students to imagine the U.S. without a military.
- Go back to Hamilton and America's founding fathers—What value did they place on creating an army? They did not necessarily want political power.
- Possibly insert a quote about the Nobel Peace Prize and what Alfred Nobel wanted: "The person who has done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace..."
- Milgram Experiment—illustrating an obedience to authority or reluctance to confront those who abuse power.

### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Set up large pictures of Oscar Arias Sanchez around the room. Students will walk around and make inferences about who they think the individual might be. They will then write a brief make-believe story about who they think he is and what he accomplished.
- Students will receive a Nobel Peace Prize nomination. Teacher will discuss the significance of the award. Students will fill in the blank nomination after they have read about Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias Sanchez.
- Ask students to list countries that do not have an active military. Ask students why they think there are very few countries without active militaries.
- List the 10 countries without militaries, using the Seville Statement of 1986 to explain that people are not predisposed to killing other people.
- List of countries:
  - <http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-countries-without-military-forces.php>
  - Seville Statement of 1986:  
<http://www.culture-of-peace.info/vita/2011/seville2011.pdf>
- Jig Saw- Have the students work in groups to come up with possible answers for the following questions. After the groups have had time to come up with their answer, they will share them with the class and the teacher will create lists and facilitate discussion about the creation and role of the military.
  - Why do countries establish militaries?
  - Can countries exist without militaries? Explain why or why not.

### ACTIVITY 1:

Begin a discussion on values and money.

- Values auction: Where does our money go? What does our money say about our values?
- Explain how purchases say a lot about people's values.
- Instruct students to list their last ten purchases.
- Review the students' lists.
- Focus on the most popular items purchased.
- Show a graph of the United States budget and the budget of one of the ten countries without a military.
- Ask guiding questions for students to reflect on in groups:
  - How are these graphs different?
  - How are each country's priorities reflected in the graphs?
  - Why do you think the United States spends so much money on defense?

### ACTIVITY 2:

- Distribute Oscar Arias Sanchez's biography. Instruct students to highlight his key accomplishments. Students will be able to explain why he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Students should also select two ideas or experiences they share in common with the Nobel Laureate.  
[www.rfkhumanrights.org](http://www.rfkhumanrights.org) / click on **Speak Truth to Power** / click on **"Defenders"** tab
- Students will write a brief introduction for the Nobel Laureate. Ask: If you had the chance to meet this individual, "how would you introduce Oscar Arias Sanchez?"

### ACTIVITY 3:

- Pass out play money to students. Students will receive different sums of money. Instruct students to buy values of their choice with their budget in mind. Students will write down their purchase and give the money to the clerk.
- Facilitate a discussion after the auction. What were some key values to everyone? Did you have access to all your values? Why or why not? What were the issues in the auction?

### ACTIVITY 4:

Ask students to respond to these questions:

- Is violence innate? Do weapons and militaries keep us safer?
- Students will write down their own thoughts about the following quotation from famous French statesman George Clemenceau: "War is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to the military." Teacher will ask students to share in pairs why war should not be entrusted to the military. How can having a strong military actually be more dangerous?
- Play an army advertisement. Students will reflect on how the video portrays the military and answer the questions: How does the video make you feel? What comes to mind when watching the video?
- Present the Seville Statement on Violence. Students will divide into groups and each group will be assigned one of the four points on the Seville Statement.
- Students will research their point and report to the class.

### CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

- Instruct students about a silent conversation: Students will read and interpret several quotes and statistics on Oscar Arias Sanchez and poverty.
  - *"Military spending is not merely a consumer excess; instead, it represents a huge perversion in the priorities of our civilization."* Explain what Oscar Arias Sanchez means in the quote.
  - *"While the world as a whole consumes twenty-four trillion dollars worth of goods and services each year, the planet holds 1.3 billion people who live on incomes of less than one dollar a day."*
  - *"The three richest countries in the world have assets that exceed the combined gross domestic product of the poorest forty-eight countries."*

Debrief on the conversations:

- Students will partner up and discuss the following questions among their groups. What problem we are facing right now, according to Oscar Arias Sanchez? How do we fit into this dilemma? What is our role? Of these quotes, which one do you relate to the most?
- Students will report their findings to the class.

## BECOME A DEFENDER

Invite a local group, advocating on behalf of disarmament, to talk to students about their group.

Students will create a youth forum discussing issues about violence in their community. The focus of their forum can be any of the following:

- Create workshops to talk about ways to avoid gang violence in the community.
- Bring younger students to the school and discuss their experience in high school and how to make sure to avoid gang affiliations.
- Invite guest speakers to talk about their experiences after joining a gang and choosing to change their lives.

### EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Voices of Youth (VOY) conducts action research about issues that impact student success and achievement—drop-out rate, discipline policy, etc. Student could connect with VOYCE, learn about their work, then conduct their own research on the spending priorities of their own school.  
<http://reclaimingfutures.org/>
- Some high schools have conducted campaigns to make students aware of unfair military recruiting practices in schools. Participating students can let other students know of their right not to receive military recruitment materials through the mail at their home. They might also invite representatives of peace initiatives to make presentations at their school as equal time. They might also invite organizations that promote a year of civic service (Americorps, VISTA).
- Students could learn about U.S. spending and about the disparity between military spending and spending on social services.
- Students could volunteer at a social service organization (food pantry, senior center) and learn more about what these organizations must do to sustain themselves.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Cure Violence:**

<http://cureviolence.org/>

Cure Violence stops the spread of violence in communities by using the methods and strategies associated with disease control – detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the highest risk individuals, and changing social norms.

### **NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security:**

<https://ngocdps.wordpress.com/about/>

For more than thirty years, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security has provided services and facilities to hundreds of citizens' groups concerned with the peace and disarmament activities of the United Nations. Because of its distinguished efforts as conference organizer, network clearing house, newspaper publisher, and year-round UN liaison, the NGO Committee is viewed as a primary ally of the international movement for arms control, peace and disarmament, and the continuing body designated to serve this worldwide constituency.

### **World Trek Website:**

<http://www.worldtrek.org/>

The Odyssey is an Internet-based nonprofit whose mission is to promote global awareness among youth through actual and virtual treks around the world.

### **United for Human Rights Website:**

<http://www.humanrights.com/>

United for Human Rights' purpose is to provide human rights educational resources and activities that inform, assist and unite individuals, educators, organizations and governmental bodies in the dissemination and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at every level of society. The website hosts many Nobel Peace Prize winners, and gives a summary of their achievements in fighting for human rights.

### **The Encyclopedia Britannica Website:**

<http://www.britannica.com/>

This online library website allows you to look up different biographies and information on the defenders and the current roles in society.

### **The Famous People Website:**

<http://www.thefamouspeople.com/>

The biographies of these people feature the achievements and works that have influenced the course of history, and this website offers all their information and biographies.