

Liz Caile Essay Contest 2006

2nd place **Caelin Sheahan** age:15

"Don't Believe the Hype"

The representatives of your state just signed some of your rights away in the name of protecting you from violence. There are many questions you should ask. Is this justified? Is it due to increased frequency? Is there an increasing tendency for violent acts such as war? In this essay I will investigate these factors.

Its war time in the good old USA. The current administration has drafted and passed several restrictions on freedom in the United States to “fight terror”. Their argument is that overall the world is a more violent place. Really? In a great op-ed piece in the December 28 Washington Post, Andrew Mack, a former aide to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, successfully demonstrates that our world has actually become a safer place. He writes: “After five decades of inexorable increase, the number of armed conflicts started to fall worldwide in the early 1990s. The decline has continued. By 2003, there were 40 percent fewer conflicts than in 1992. The deadliest conflicts -- those with 1,000 or more battle-deaths -- fell by some 80 percent. The number of genocides and other mass slaughters of civilians also dropped by 80 percent [between 1988 and 2001], while core human rights abuses have declined in five out of six regions of the developing world since the mid-1990s.” These facts come from the University of British Columbia's Human Security Center (Andrew Mack is the director). Also, on a similar note, the number of refugees have dropped near 45% since 1990. This proves that the most devastating type of violence, war, is actually in decline. The other major type of violence that Americans fear, is crime. The most feared type of crime is violent crime. This category of crime includes murder, rape, assault and robbery. Violent crime has decreased with regular crime over the last 15 years, but violent crime has decreased

even faster. In the years, between 2003 and 2004, the crime rate (for every 100,000 people) decreased 2.2%. But this is still nothing compared to the more than 50% decrease since 1990, or the 24% decrease since 1995. All signs point to an even further decrease in crime overall so there is no reason to fear.

What is to thank for this decrease in violence? My answer might surprise you. This decrease is related to fear, the fear of being caught. This pertains mostly to crime because the science of stopping and solving crimes has made giant leaps. It is no longer easy to get away with a crime thanks to technology such as DNA testing. This has increased the chance of getting caught for a crime such as murder to around 50%. This is all thanks to your tax contribution towards science. You can also thank the increased scrutiny and peacekeeping efforts of the UN for the decrease in war related violence. The chance of getting away with violence is decreasing thanks to the efforts of many, but with no thanks to the president. You just can't fight violence with violence.

The world has not become a more violent place but a more peaceful one. The fear the current administration has blanketed across that American public is based on nothing. Odds of fatally slipping in a bath or shower: 2,232 to 1, odds that you will die from a fall off a ladder: 1 in 10,010, and the odds of dying in a terrorist attack: 1 in 650,000. Giving up your freedom for protection from terrorists: priceless, there are some things freedom can not buy, but for everything else there's the Patriot Act. Are you ready for the global war on those American hating ladders?