

Letter to Santa Cruz Sentinel 10/19/01

“Why do they hate us?” we ask. “We are the good guys!” But the better question for Americans to ponder is: “Why do they fear us? Why do they think we hate them?” We Americans have indeed contributed a lot over the years to humanity’s struggle for democracy, civil rights and a good life for all; and it is true that we are forever offering a helping hand to the needy. But that is not the whole story. We have also armed dictators, starved and terrorized civilian populations and sown minefields all around the world since World War II, while refusing to cooperate with many international efforts to improve the human condition. At the same time we have persistently displayed both ignorance and arrogance in our attitude towards the rest of the human race. That is why some people hate us and most people fear and distrust us- even, often enough, the very people who’d give their eyeteeth to come live here and share our comforts. This is a serious problem for all of us and for our grandchildren. The solution is not more war and devastation. It is a brand new foreign policy that cuts the empty “superpower” talk for once and for all, makes a point of threatening no one, and concentrates on making this country a good neighbor to all. That is something that is called for by all of our faith traditions, and that every single American knows perfectly well how to do and be.