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AP Photo/Susan Walsh

Third U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Pfc. Kaitlyn Bolde of Scotia, N.Y., places a flag in front of a headstone at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Thursday. "Flags In" is an annual tradition that is reserved for The Old Guard since its designation as the Army's official ceremonial unit in 1948. They conduct the mission annually at Arlington National Cemetery and the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery prior to Memorial Day to honor the nation's fallen military heroes.

Today is about the cost of war

Every war creates a new generation of veterans

The Iraq War won't go away. It surfaced last week in debate among Republican presidential candidates.

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said he would not have made the decision that his brother George made to invade Iraq. Asked about her support for the Iraq War resolution while a senator, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton said she based that vote on the intelligence she was shown at that time.

When lawmakers such as former Sen. Clinton vote to send young men and women into combat, no one points out that Congress and the president are creating a new generation of veterans. No one talks about that cost of war.

Today we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice — giving their life because their country sent them to war.

There was a time when Congress contained many veterans. Because there is no draft, there are now few veterans in the House or Senate. There is always plenty of war rhetoric, but very little perspective based on experience.

For a majority of Americans, Memorial Day is most meaningfully about the veterans who are still actively endeavoring to live following the endless years of war begun after the craven attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

How easy it still is for old men to start wars that burn up the lives of the young. The Iraq War especially deserves to be remembered as a "war of choice" launched by political

leaders who never personally risked a drop of their own blood defending the nation.

President Ulysses Grant — as good a general as the U.S. ever had — said, "There never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword." Our sad drumbeat of wars in the 20th and 21st centuries informs us that we are still too far away from learning this lesson.

But war is not the true subject for Memorial Day. We honor the personal sacrifices that men and women have made in the name of our nation and its Constitution.

We who live in the relative comfort of 2014 cannot ignore these sacrifices. We cannot commend one soldier's valor and minimize another's, depending on whether we deem one a "good war" and the other not.

What we honor this day is selfless service to the country. But if this day is to be anything but an excuse for a day off from work, we must put meat on the bones of otherwise empty promises. Looking back in time, nations including ours pay lip service to veterans, while consigning all too many of them to lives of pain and neglect. Genuinely honoring veterans means remembering them and tending to their needs on 365 days of the year, not just this one.



AP Photo/Susan Walsh

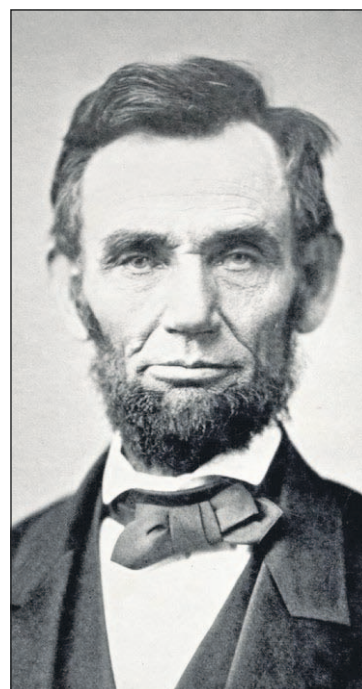
Third U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) Pfc. Kaitlyn Bolde of Scotia, N.Y., places a flag in front of a headstone at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Thursday.

Of the people, by the people, for the people

President Abraham Lincoln delivered this address at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa., on Nov. 19, 1863.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot



Abraham Lincoln

dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far

above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.



Building spiritual capital in youth

By DAVID BROOKS
New York Times News Service

Lisa Miller is a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University.

One day she entered a subway car and saw that half of it was crowded but the other half was empty, except for a homeless man who had some fast food on his lap and who was screaming at anybody who came close.

At one stop, a grandmother and granddaughter, about 8, entered the car. They were elegantly dressed, wearing pastel dresses and gloves with lace trim. The homeless man spotted them and screamed, "Hey! Do you want to sit with me?" They looked at each other, nodded and replied in unison, "Thank you," and, unlike everybody else, sat directly next to him.

The man offered them some chicken from his bag. They looked at each other and nodded and said, "No, thank you." The homeless man offered several more times, and each time they nodded to each other and gave the same polite answer. Finally, the homeless man was calmed, and they all sat contentedly in their seats.

Miller was struck by the power of that nod.

"The nod was spirituality shared between child and beloved elder: spiritual direction, values, taught and received in the loving relationship," she writes in her book "The Spiritual Child."

The grandmother was teaching the granddaughter the wisdom that we were once all strangers in a strange land and that we're judged by how we treat those who have the least.

Miller's core argument is that spiritual awareness is innate and that it is an important component in

human development. An implication of her work is that if you care about social mobility, graduation rates, resilience, achievement and family formation, you can't ignore the spiritual resources of the people you are trying to help.

Miller defines spirituality as "an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding." Different people can conceive of this higher power as God, nature, spirit, the universe or just a general oneness of being. She distinguishes spirituality, which has a provable genetic component, from religious affiliation, which is entirely influenced by environment.

I'd say Miller doesn't pay sufficient attention to the many secular, this-world ways people find to organize their lives. Still, it does seem true that most children are born with a natural sense of the spiritual. If they find a dead squirrel on the playground, they understand there is something sacred there, and they will most likely give it a respectful burial. They have a natural sense of the oneness of creation, and a sense of a transcendent, non-material realm. Miller cites twin studies that suggest that the

Public schools often give short shrift to spirituality.

strength of a child's spiritual awareness is about 29 percent because of broad genetic heritability, 24 percent because of family environment and 47 percent because of a person's unique individual environment.

Spiritual awareness, she continues, surges in adolescence, at about the same time as puberty and other threats to well-being. Some level of teenage depression, she says, should be seen as a normal part of the growth process, as young people ask fundamental questions of themselves. The spiritual surge in adolescence is nature's way of responding



David Brooks

to this normal crisis.

Taken together, "Miller writes," research supports the idea of a common physiology underlying depression and spirituality."

In other words, teenagers commonly suffer a loss of meaning, confidence and identity. Some of them try to fill the void with drugs, alcohol, gang activity and even pregnancy. But others are surrounded by people who have cultivated their spiritual instincts. According to Miller's research, adolescents with a strong sense of connection to a transcendent realm are 70 percent to 80 percent less likely to engage in heavy substance abuse. Among teenage girls, having a strong spiritual sense was extremely protective against serious depression. Adults who consider themselves highly spiritual at age 26 are, according to her research, 75 percent protected against recurrence of depression.

Innate spiritual capacities can wither unless cultivated — the way that innate math faculties can go undeveloped without instruction. Loving families nurture these capacities, especially when parents speak explicitly about spiritual quests. The larger question, especially in this age of family disruption, is whether public schools and other institutions should do more to nurture spiritual faculties.

Public schools often give short shrift to spirituality for fear that they would be accused of proselytizing religion. But it should be possible to teach the range of spiritual disciplines, in order to familiarize students with the options, without endorsing any one.

In an era in which so many people slip off the rails during adolescence, we don't have the luxury of ignoring a resource that, if cultivated, could see them through. Ignoring spiritual development in the public square is like ignoring intellectual, physical or social development. It is to amputate people in a fundamental way, leading to more depression, drug abuse, alienation and misery.