

“Is it human nature to dehumanize our opponents?”
by Luke Babich, University City High School Class of 2012

Of course it is. Whether our battlefield is a classroom, a foreign jungle, or a football field, our conscience demands that our victory should be a morally just one. In any conflict each side wants to win equally; in a sports game both teams have families and friends cheering them on, fans crossing fingers for that final game-winning touch-down. Both teams want to feel their hearts soar in that indescribable feeling of victory, but only one will. But that isn't what the players think about.



For one team to win, the other has to lose. And the losers will shed tears and bemoan their loss no differently than their opponents might have, had things been different. But why should the dirty reality of defeat have to sully the winners' carefree moment? They have finally achieved what they have been fighting for, and to admit that there is a cost to their success would accomplish nothing and smear their victory.

In war, this tactic is even more important. How can a soldier justify taking another man's life? Certainly not by acknowledging that the faceless enemy was once a child, and had parents, and maybe has a wife and children of his own.

To stay sane, and to live with oneself, they have to convince themselves that their enemies are in some basic way inferior. After all, wouldn't the soldier who can accept all of the horrible implications of taking a life be the truly evil one, the inferior one? But most of us could not accept the idea of killing another person, and don't like causing another person pain. So yes, as much as conscience is a part of human nature, so is the dehumanization of our enemies.