

Thoughts on the World of Drones

by **John Amidon**, Reposted from the [Albany Times Union](#)

Sitting in my kitchen, the house is silent. I have a moment to reflect on my arrest at Creech Air Force Base. I was one of 34 men and women who tried to keep drone pilots from entering the site in Indian Springs, Nev.

My friends wonder what I accomplished? Have I stopped any drones from flying? On April 23, President Obama informed the nation that U.S. drone strikes had killed innocent American and Italian hostages in Pakistan. Despite some public outrage, our culture has normalized collateral damage, a euphemism for innocent dead children or innocent dead civilians.

Unexpectedly my thoughts turn to a Hollywood movie and one-woman play that was performed in Albany. The frustration and the doubt of the movie "Birdman" – the story of an actor trying to reclaim the stardom he'd had as a blockbuster superhero – comes flooding in. I understand the protagonist, Riggan Thomson.

I too desperately want to be relevant and want to fly. If I were a superhero I could knock down the drones. Then the killing would stop and we would start growing up, finding life-affirming nonviolent solutions to real problems.

Ironically, I also find something in common with the protagonist in the play "Grounded" by George Brant.

It tells the story of a former F-16 fighter pilot, a woman who finds her humanity after becoming a mother. When ordered to fire a missile at a suspected terrorist she cannot because the target's daughter unexpectedly has entered the kill zone.

She cannot help but see her own daughter. Like the pilot, I sit before a computer. Rather than firing missiles I am writing missives. Does this help anyone understand how deadly and inaccurate, how cruel the drone assassination program is, that we are killing hundreds of children, creating more new enemies than people we kill? Has my arrest helped to stop a murderous foreign policy?

In "Birdman," Riggan Thomson, played by Michael Keaton, is producing the play, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." Riggan's alter ego suggests that violence and a reprisal of the Birdman character he created on film will return him to relevance. Instead Riggan insists on attempting to find his humanity through theater.

In "Grounded" and the "Birdman," the protagonists are left broken souls. In moments of doubt, I too feel the despair. In a culture that worships at the altar of war, where flying killer robotic machines are an everyday reality, I may forever remain irrelevant when I say nonviolence and love are the only way forward.

But if we are ever to fly in peace, it will only be on the wings of love. To achieve this we must learn that love starts where violence ends.

John Amidon of Albany is president of the Interfaith Alliance of New York State.