

Martin Luther King Jr.: Stop the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Stop the Mugging of the Middle Class and Poor by the Wealthy

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, January 18, 2011

[Washington's Blog](#) 17 January 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The Defense Department's general counsel [said](#) that he believed Martin Luther King, Jr., might have supported the current wars:

I believe that if Dr. King were alive today, he would recognize that we live in a complicated world, and that our nation's military should not and cannot lay down its arms and leave the American people vulnerable to terrorist attack.

That is easily disproven.

As King [said](#) in 1967:

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they ask — and rightly so — what about Vietnam? They ask if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today — my own government... We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. And history is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate.

King also [proclaimed](#) in 1967:

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, 'This way of settling differences is not just.'... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

King [lamented](#) that the United States had become the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today, said the world "is sick with war", and said that "war is not the answer." King said:

I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and the self-defeating method of physical violence.

And he warned that the deep malady of the American spirit is our perverse devotion to what he called the “giant triplets” of “racism, extreme materialism, and militarism.”

Indeed, if one understands King’s core philosophies, the Pentagon’s statement becomes even sillier.

Initially, as Pulitzer Prize-winning author Chris Hedges [points out](#):

Anger at injustice, as Martin Luther King wrote, is the political expression of love.

In other words, King believed that his Christian faith [required him to fight injustice](#). That is why King said that we have to fight against “systems of exploitation and oppression.”

Moreover, King was an adherent of two [philosophical concepts](#) which Gandhi also followed:

1. “Ahimsa” - non-violence towards all

and

2. “Satyagraha” - truth is the only weapon needed

Adherents of the philosophy of ahimsa don’t believe that some wars are justified ... they believe that we shouldn’t harm any person or even any critter if we can help it (the most extreme followers of ahimsa are the Jain sect of India. They are so extreme that they [sweep the path ahead of them](#) when they walk so that they will not accidentally squish any bugs. Neither Gandhi or King were Jainists, however, this extreme example helps to explain the basic idea.)

Indeed, the following statements by King only make sense when one understands King’s ahimsa philosophy:

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.”

“Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

“Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars... Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

In addition, adherents of the philosophy of satyagraha believe that truth is the most powerful force in the universe. That is why both Gandhi and King believed that non-violent resistance is the most effective form of dissent: they believed that the “force of truth” would eventually win out over the “force of violence”.

King Was Against Economic Injustice

Additionally, King fought against economic injustice as well. For example, he [said](#):

I never intend to adjust myself to the tragic inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes.

As Roger Bybee [writes](#) today:

As Norman Solomon and Jeff Cohen noted,

But after passage of civil rights acts in 1964 and 1965, King began challenging the nation's fundamental priorities. He maintained that civil rights laws were empty without "human rights" — including [economic rights](#). For people too poor to eat at a restaurant or afford a decent home, King said, anti-discrimination laws were hollow.

Noting that a majority of Americans below the poverty line were white, King developed a class perspective. He decried the huge income gaps between rich and poor, and called for "radical changes in the structure of our society" to redistribute wealth and power."

Thus, at the time of his death on April 4, 1968, Dr. King was deeply immersed in the struggle of 1,300 black sanitation workers in Memphis who had organized themselves into an AFSCME local.. At the same time, he was also building a coalition for a "Poor People's Campaign" that would assemble in Washington, D.C., to demand "economic rights" for people of all colors. It was aimed at building a mighty coalition that would span autoworkers in Detroit, discarded coalminers in Appalachia, Latino farmworkers, and oppressed blacks in both the South and North.

In his new book *All Work Has Dignity*, Honey pulls together 11 of King's speeches on labor and explains the lasting significance of King's emphasis on the need for "economic rights" for all.

People forget that Dr. King was every bit as committed to economic justice as he was to ending racial segregation. As we struggle with massive unemployment, a staggering racial wealth gap and near collapse of our financial system, King's prophetic writings and speeches underscore his relevance for today.

And so - if King were alive today - it is certain that he would be demanding an end to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, and an end up to the [mugging of the middle and lower classes](#) by the wealthy.

Of course, to the extent that the war in the Middle East is [largely a crusade](#) against brown-skinned Muslims, King would also have opposed it as being based on racism and religious intolerance.

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