

US Imperialism, Racism, and the Need for a New Anti-war Movement

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I have been an activist on Long Island since I organized my 8th grade class to write articles in the Westbury Times calling for a new High School. I sang for the Sane Nuclear Policy group in 1960, I organized against the wars in Vietnam, Central America, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yugoslavia; Iraq again...Then there was quiet. Organizing for peace by the 1990s was stymied by the powerful Democratic Party support of Clinton's wars against Somalia, Chad and Yugoslavia, as well as the Desert Storm/Desert Shield operations both the Bush (pere) and Clinton's regimes perpetrated against Iraq. Liberals have clung to the Democratic Party and they don't work for peace; they have long supported all US wars from at least World War I to the present conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and wherever US troops and materiel is deployed.

They promote the demonization of leaders and people, and accuse anyone with a different take on the world of being a conspiracy theorist, a term made up by the CIA, by the way. As former CIA official John Stockwell said:

__ "It is the function of the CIA to keep the world unstable, and to propagandize and teach the American people to hate, so we will let the Establishment spend any amount of money on arms."

People didn't want George Bush's war on Iraq; millions here and around the world in 2003 said no, thronging the streets of New York and Washington opposed to war on Afghanistan and Iraq. Heedless, the Whitehouse and the Pentagon proceeded to murder over one million Iraqis, and to destroy the infrastructure of the most advanced country of the Middle East. For peace activists, things became even more difficult after 9/11. The bourgeois media went into overdrive with the ubiquitous War on Terror," supporting the "Endless wars" and the coups the Bush, Obama, and Trump regimes perpetrated. The US government targeted Libya, Honduras, Ukraine; wherever they wished... Bombing, occupation and regime change campaigns promoted the geostrategic needs of the ruling class with US government leaders, Democrats and Republicans alike carrying out their instructions.

There were revelations: US General Wesley Clark said he had heard, in 2001, directly from someone in the "the Secretary of Defense's office"[detailing] "a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran."

The United States military then proceeded to invade or bomb every single one of those countries. Since 9/11 our tax dollars have paid for \$5.6 trillion worth of munitions, bombs,

guns, planes, ships, tanks, Humvees, missiles...to manufacturers of this deadly equipment, and the bankers who finance these wars. ([Source](#))

It is all war, all the time. Both Democrats and Republicans have threatened wars on North Korea- DPRK: Democratic Republic of Korea, Iran, Russia and China. The Democrats oppose Trump's peace [and hotel] overtures to the DPRK;last week, Wall Street stocks just sank with the threat of peace. The Apocalyptical Christian Fundamentalists look forward to World War III when they will all fly naked to heaven, leaving the rest of humankind to burn in a Hell on Earth.

For those of us who don't find that prospect wonderful, there needs to be a reckoning, a reorganization, what Martin Luther King Jr. called, in a speech exactly one year before his death,

"A time comes when silence is betrayal."

It is important to remember what Dr. King said as it is a perfect analysis and advice for us fifty years after his assassination.

Dr. King said people,

"do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought."

He spoke of the war in Vietnam and said, when

"came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched [the War on Poverty] program broken and eviscerated, as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such."

Dr. King said then,

"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."

What did Martin Luther King Jr. say that was not true? And though we have been inundated with fear of terrorists in our country and around the world, in fact the United States is now even MORE the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." The greatest terrorist.

Now, I am an historian. I have taught history of the US for 53 years. And one of the most important things I have tried to do is to expose the truth about the US history. Because children here are raised on that US "exceptionalism," which makes Columbus a hero, though he killed most of the five million Taino/Arawak people of the Caribbean islands. US Social

Studies texts and teachers revere the colonists who made war on the indigenous people, and the slaveholders who were our first presidents: The "Founding Fathers." Teachers extoll Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase as doubling the size of the US, though all that land was stolen from the Native People who Jefferson called "uncivilized." Children learn to take pride in US aggressiveness and plunder. When indigenous nations fought the settlers and the army called them "savages," - that pattern of demonization became the official template for any people who resisted US war or aggression.

So, revolts of enslaved people were brutally oppressed, and anyone fighting against slavery with guns was crazy, vicious, and wrong, be they Maroon colonies of Blacks and Seminoles, Creeks or Choctaws, or even the white man, John Brown, who said slavery would not end but with blood!

When the US created an incident to attack Mexico, in the interest of the slaveholders, all opposition was suppressed, as was all efforts to end slavery. The US ended up with 1/3 of Mexico by 1848.

They do not teach Native American history here, but the US from the 1858 to 1890 decimated and ethnically cleansed the indigenous people in a series of wars called, "The Indian Wars." Then the Dawes-Severalty Act placed survivors of those wars on reservations , and took their children away to the "Indian Schools," robbing them of their culture and killing them with abuse. This happened to every Indigenous tribe west of the Mississippi River. (Read Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz's Indigenous History of the United States).

Adolph Hitler studied the 1887 Dawes Act and this is where he got the idea of Concentration Camps. He also was an avid supporter of the US ideology of Eugenics and Social Darwinism. These "philosophies" emerged in the age of the Robber Barons, the late 19th Century, when the ruling class of the US took over not only the economy, but education, manipulating peoples' ideology through the media and the politicians who ran the country from municipalities to the federal government. Laws and misinformation officially designated as inferiors all people of color -Blacks, Mexicans, Chinese, but also poor whites, and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe.

My object here isn't to bore you with old historical developments, but to put into perspective how the people of the United States have been socially engineered into abandoning natural compassion and concern for their fellow human beings. Because in fact, this has been the program of the United States since its founding. A settler regime requires support from those who would even marginally benefit from its aggressive policies. So, during the "Indian Wars," when the US Army fought the Nez Perces, the Sioux, the Apaches, the Pomo, the Arapaho, the Cheyenne, and dozens more, they were acting in the interests of the mining moguls, the bonanza ranch companies, the sheep farmers, the railroad magnates. From Washington to Lincoln, and into the 1890s, the expansionism of the United States benefited white settlers. And when US Army killed Indigenous people, it made way for huge profits for the new Robber Barons.

Gradually, US family farmers, who benefited from the robbery of Indigenous land, succumbed one by one to the depressions of 1873, 1893, 1913, and finally the Great Depression. The big companies got all the farm land. That's agribusiness. [In the 1980s Iowa Senator Tom Harkin said to me that there were more foreclosures in Iowa under Reagan than there had been in the Great Depression]. And the mining companies beat back every

strike across the West with goon squads and National Guardsmen.

Everywhere, racism had taken root. In the South, Jim Crow laws and ideological manipulation gave poor whites the illusion of superiority to Black people. In the West, whites hated Native People and Mexicans: killed them, segregated them, and stole their land. Racism was taught in schools, it was legitimized in textbooks, it was preached from pulpits; it was in the media. Upper class white ideologues needed the poor people, 90% of the population, divided, especially after industrialization. It was an agenda: keep poor Black and white people apart, immigrants and native-born white workers apart, all to destroy class unity among workers in factories, mines, and to separate Black and white tenant farmers and sharecroppers.... vilify Mexicans and Chinese and Japanese...



A word about racism. Racism is a method of control. It is not a reaction to oppression, it is a tool of oppression, and therefore, it is reserved for the white people who are supposed to identify with the oppressor and to feel “superior” to the oppressed, people of color in the case of the US, or vilified and selected immigrants. Race is a construct; there is only one actual race; it is the human race, but the ideological leaders of the US have designated color or ethnicity as having to do with “race.” The better to divide us.

The US had, until the end of the 19th century, a frontier beyond which people down on their luck could go. By 1890, all the US land was Private Property, and there was no new land upon which people could settle. The rich mostly had it all. The economy was in shambles, and workers and farmers alike were rising up. The upper class feared revolution, there were resistance movements everywhere! Farmers! Workers! Strikes! Socialism! Even Blacks and whites were uniting in the South.

This threat of the poor uniting and rising up was the cause of US expansionism out-of-country. The Battleship Maine business was a sham, what we now call a “False Flag,” because with the Spanish-American War, the US embarked upon a path of imperialism, with governmental and economic leaders and the Yellow Journalist Press leading the attack. The bourgeoisie needed to expand. Capitalism must always expand! Raw materials stolen from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawai’i the Philippines, fruits of the Spanish American War, would lead to the US acquiring world’s riches! The US looked to China and also to Latin America. Their Patriarchal, racist, “Virile” aggressiveness was deified in a speech called “March of the Flag. Senator Albert Beveridge said:

“Fellow citizens, it is a noble land that God has given us; ... a history of statesmen who flung the boundaries of the Republic out into unexplored lands and savage wildernesses ... Shall the American people continue their resistless march toward the commercial supremacy of the world?... The Opposition tells us that we ought not to govern a people without their consent. I answer; the rule of liberty that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government. We govern the Indians without their consent, we govern our territories without their consent, we govern our children without their consent...”

To-day, we are making more than we can use. To-day, our industrial society is congested; there are more workers than there is work! ... As our commerce spreads, the flag of liberty will circle the globe, and the highways of the ocean carrying trade of all mankind, [will] be guarded by the guns of the republic. And, as their thunders salute the flag, benighted peoples will know that the voice of Liberty is speaking, at last, for them; that civilization is dawning, at last, for them!”

There it is: the prediction that the US would “continue a relentless march toward commercial supremacy of the world.” Justified by the glorious, “March of the Flag!” In the Spanish-American War, the US defeated the Spanish in Cuba in short order, but the US army was faced with the resistance of the people of the Philippines. After the defeat of the Spanish, the US killed over one million Filipinos. Since the ruling philosophy claimed that the Filipinos, like the Indigenous, were “savages;” the US perpetrated a genocide. US Generals directed soldiers to kill “everyone over ten” on those islands. In the Indian wars, the US Army said,

“The only good Indian was a dead Indian.”

The US military compared the Filipinos to “savage Indians.” There was opposition, and the US shifted into less obvious imperial practices, “Dollar Diplomacy” in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Moral Diplomacy- against Mexico, and all those natural resources: sugar, oil, timber, guano, lead, silver, other minerals - came home providing industrial jobs for the US working class.

So, the war on the indigenous, the continuation of racism after the end of slavery, and the first overseas imperial war the US fought were all predicated and justified upon racism and white supremacy. The cause of this all this expansionism was economic. Old Sir Walter Raleigh, an early imperialist pirate, said,

“Who controls the trade of the world controls the wealth of the world and consequently the World itself.”

That has been the path of the US ever since its founding.

World War one was done in company of the British Imperialists. It was a war for the bankers and industrialists: and resources. Nine million men died. Any opposition to the war was hushed by the Sedition and Espionage Acts. After WW I, the US laid claim to and laid waste to Central America and the Caribbean. United Fruit... “Gunboat Diplomacy” was imperialism and enforced by a bunch of Marines in China and the Western Hemisphere. March of the Flag.

The US came out on top and claimed victory in WW II, though they never mention that the Soviets won the war in Europe by the sacrifice of 27 million Soviet People. Post-War, the US wanted continued access to Asia, where most of US WW II military effort had gone.

But the Communists! The damned Communists wanted to get rid of imperial oppression and poverty and organize socialist economies – so people could live! So, US wars after WW II were against Communists in Asia; they armed and supported Chaing Kai-Chek against Mao and the Red Army. They used the UN to invade Korea against the Communist Revolution there. The US paid 80% of the French Indochina War, until they took over and began a mass murder and invasion of Vietnam against the protocols of the UN Geneva Accords. Fighting Communism meant ignoring international law, opposing peoples' right to self-determination.

And then the Civil Rights Movement emerged out of the Black Churches in the US. J. Edgar Hoover was freaked out; the FBI went on full alert. People were on the move again in the US.

In the midst of all this the Cuban Revolution succeeded, and people here who were not anti-communists saw this as a victory for workers and peasants. The the peace movement bloomed: with the anti-Nuclear Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy and then the movement against the war in Vietnam.

As our anti-war movements developed, our plan was “teach” the truth, and unteach the support that would make people want to kill other people who wanted communism. Crushing communism and killing communists was the central important message of the Cold War at home, so even unions were called communist. In the popular media and the schools, Communists were demonized; communists were bad and should be killed along with anyone who followed them.



Korean War in the 1950s

You have to demonize the people of another country to make people believe in killing them. Communist Koreans deserved to die; the US killed four million Koreans of them, leveled every city. Then the US killed 3 million Vietnamese.

Until 1975.

But the media showed the truth. And at home, the martyrs and the multitudes in the Civil Rights and Black Panther movements, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, the Black Power

Movement, the American Indian Movement, the Young Lords and then the students against the war.... Our humanity reasserted itself.

You see where this is going and where it comes from. In the 1980s, when communists were involved in revolutionary movements in Latin America, a movement sprang up uniting with people from Latin America and people from the US supporting Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, and opposing US arming of Contras and fascist governments.

After the USSR died in 1991, the US had access to the resources of the former socialist republics. Expansion of capitalism followed: neoliberalism, privatizing publicly owned resources or closing them down.

Then: new enemies: Saddam Hussein: so, bomb Iraq; was there was a small anti-Iraq war movement but liberals were saying, "Let sanctions work." The Iraqi people were then murdered in their millions by those sanctions, about which Madelaine Albright said -the death of 500,000 children was "worth it." Then there was the Depleted Uranium and the devastation of cultural Iraq.

For over 30 years, the US government and media have been supporting the murder of millions of people. It is not about freedom; it is about oil, resources, trade routes, and capitalism. The March of the Flag.

There was a big anti-war movement before the second Iraq war but the government bombed anyhow and devised a way of having reporters there 'EMBEDDED WITH US TROUPS!' Could there ever be a more honest way our government could have told us that the only information we would ever get would be from the military?

Then the US proceeded with devastating wars on Libya, Syria, with their Saudi buddies bombing the beautiful country of Yemen, deliberately starving millions. US troops are there now. Syria was a different story: she fought back, brought in the Russians, the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Iranians. The US vilifies all those resisters too. Of course, the justification for bombing was Bashar al Assad, the so-called dictator [beloved of his people]. When it was discovered that the terrorists in [ISIS -Al Nusra and Al Qaeda were armed and trained and funded by the US](#), the US mainstream press covered it up.

This war on Syria has killed half a million Syrians, decimated ancient cities, and the US is illegally occupying the norther quadrant of the country along with the their terrorists, the French, and the British. War is still raging, and there is talk of NATO war on Russia and China too.

22 years ago yesterday, my husband Sean Gervasi died in Yugoslavia trying to tell the truth about the menace of NATO expansion and the US/NATO lies that eventually tore that sovereign country to pieces. He wrote the Prague Declaration for the Conference on the Enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean" in 1996, concluding,

"The Western system is experiencing a profound economic, social and political crisis. And Western leaders apparently see the exploitation of the East as the only large-scale project available which might stimulate growth, especially in Western Europe.

They are therefore prepared to risk a great deal for it. The question is: will the world accept the risks of East-West conflict and nuclear war in order to lock

into one region economic arrangements which are already collapsing elsewhere?"

Are we? Because that is on the table. I am not for the wars OR those iniquitous economic arrangements. And that's why I am here today.

With the Women's March on the Pentagon, we have the beginnings of a National Peace Movement again. And I am here asking you to join it. Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq in 2004, did not take the loss of her son Casey Sheehan in Iraq as some great victory for America. She was and is angry. Her son, who never wanted to kill anyone, was killed for a ruthless imperialist system. She wrote 3 years ago,

[1] " wonder if there is any hope to end the evil of US empire, or are we doomed to "wash, rinse, and repeat" these stories of infamy and tragedy over and over again until the USA collapses from the weight of all the carnage?"

Well, with the heart of a phoenix, and all her anger intact, Cindy launched the Women's March on the Pentagon this year, and hundreds of women and not a few men, joined her because the anti-war movement can't collapse under the weight of carnage. We need to rise again from our ashes. We are.

I hope you will want to join us on our buses or invite the Long island Women involved in this into your living rooms or libraries to discuss this and create a powerful opposition to these bi-partisan wars. We really need you. Not on line or in Facebook, but in person to spread the word: US wars must end! We need our tax money for schools, housing, health care, childcare, the infrastructure, to save the environment, to stop non-renewable energy expansion, stop the pipelines! End the school-to-prison pipeline! Treat immigrants with compassion! Most people want this, but we feel immobilized. We need to mobilize. Only a viable peace and justice movement can accomplish this. Please join us!

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