

Amendments was linked to other problems -- so intricately linked that ultimately the nation needed to address deeper issues to resolve it.

When what seemed to most of the people in Indochina to be a struggle to achieve independence from colonial Western powers was interpreted by the U.S. government as part of a Communist struggle to dominate the world, the result was the Vietnam War.



The names of more than 58,000 Americans killed or missing are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The total number of others who died in that conflict is, by one estimate, some forty times greater: about 2,300,000. For years, as Martin Luther King Jr. saw the growing slaughter and watched the national debate about it rend the very fabric of this nation, he refrained from commenting, heeding the advice of those who said he would lose his effectiveness as a civil rights leader if he spoke against the war.

Finally, in the spring of 1967, King could wait no longer. On the evening of April 4, 1967, in Riverside Church in New York City, he delivered an address that is variously known as "Beyond Vietnam," "A Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," and "A Time to Break Silence." Exactly one year later he would be dead, felled by an assassin's bullet.

King's words were highly controversial in 1967. Many leaders of the black establishment condemned them, as did voices of mainstream opinion like the *New York Times* and black syndicated columnist Carl Rowan.

King's words continue to be controversial today, for a simple reason: King denounced, as the three leading sins of American society, racism, extreme materialism, and militarism. The national repudiation of Senator Trent Lott's remarks in December 2002 suggest that some of official America, at least, has moved beyond racism. But who would go so far as to say that we have taken even the first steps toward overcoming extreme materialism and militarism?

Far from overcoming extreme materialism and militarism, most of our leaders increasingly identify them as the essence of the American way of life, requiring that we aggressively seek control of a disproportionate share of the world's resources in order to buy things of which we may have little need. We call it "sustaining the economy," as though "economy" represented some measure of absolute good and not the wise management of limited resources. If this is a sign of our **materialism**, the increasingly heard misidentification of patriotism with support for the government and of support for our system of government with applause for any and all military actions undertaken by the United States are signs of our **militarism**.



Martin Luther King Jr.'s message to us thirty-five years ago was a simple one. The transcript of his historic speech reads: "I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin [applause], we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

Every American should read Dr. King's speech in its entirety. It's available on-line at: http://www.aavw.org/protest/homepage_king_beyond.html.

The citizens of this nation have not yet heeded his words. But we believe they must heed his words if the United States of America is to be what it can and should be: true to its core values of liberty and justice for all -- the values for which Martin Luther King Jr. gave his life.

The choice Americans face in 2003 finds its focus in Iraq. Will the American people tolerate the waging of an unnecessary war in their name, at the cost of who knows how much treasure and how many lives destroyed and blighted, a war that after a year of massive propaganda most citizens still find dubious, and that is almost universally opposed by the peoples of the world?

Opinions vary on what this war is really about. Is it about oil? Is it about fear of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of an insane tyrant? Is it about the threat of terrorism? Or is it about a plan to impose U.S. hegemony over areas of vital strategic importance to a global power? What is *your* opinion?

YOU, AS AN AMERICAN, HAVE A DUTY to form your own opinions about these questions. A local group, People for Peace, Justice, and Healing, maintains a webpage of materials about the pending war on Iraq at www.tacomapjh.org/iraq.htm that can help.



UNITED FOR PEACE OF PIERCE COUNTY is a group of residents in Tacoma and Pierce County dedicated to opposing this war non-violently. We are convinced it is the wrong choice for the nation, and we are convinced that Martin Luther King Jr. would think so too. Do you agree? Then join us! It's what King would have wanted you to do.

THIS WAR CAN STILL BE STOPPED! Never before in American history have so many people been so vocal in opposition to a war before it begins in earnest. It's not easy to speak out against the government, but as King showed, sometimes you must. Get informed, get active, and get involved!

UNITED FOR PEACE OF PIERCE COUNTY came into existence on November 14, 2002 as *the December 8th Coalition* and organized an anti-war rally and march around the Tacoma Mall on December 8. We are now affiliated with the national UNITED FOR PEACE coalition. We will be organizing other activities in the months ahead. We need your help, your ideas, and your contributions, and we welcome your involvement.

United for Peace of Pierce County
www.tacomapjh.org/ufppc.htm
253-535-7219

United for Peace
www.unitedforpeace.org
212-927-8342

KING OF PEACE



In 2003 the United States of America faces a choice, and every American should be involved in making that choice. As we begin the 21st century and ask ourselves what future we should embrace as a people, we should use the day that the nation has set aside for the commemoration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to seek in his words signs of the guidance he would have given us now, had his life not been snatched away at the untimely age of 39.

UNITED FOR PEACE OF PIERCE COUNTY joins the citizens of Pierce County in commemorating the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr., and invites you to spend a moment thinking about what King's life and values mean here and now, at this time and in this place.

Given the state of American society into which Martin Luther King Jr. was born, it was inevitable that his principle focus should have been the abysmal failure of the United States to fulfill the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln in 1863, a promise that was written into the United States Constitution after the Civil War in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. King was born into a nation still far from realizing the commitment contained in those texts, especially in Section 1 of the 14th Amendment, which guarantees the basic human rights of life, liberty, property, and due process of law to everyone born or naturalized in the United States, and of Section 5 of the same amendment, giving the Congress of the United States the power to enforce those rights. Instead, King found a society that had instituted a system of enforced segregation that made a mockery of those guarantees. His historic mission was to lead the movement that overthrew this unjust system, and it is generally accepted that he gave his life in that cause.

But Martin Luther King, Jr. knew that the racism that prevented the United States of America from fulfilling the promises of the 13th, 14th, and 15th