

This Black History Month, Let's Revive King's Antiwar Radicalism **By Derrick Darby and Christian Davenport**

Watching Angela Davis speak to a full house at the University of Michigan's recent [Martin Luther King, Jr. symposium](#) was like peering through a window at a radical past – a forgotten legacy of King, Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois and Claudia Jones – that needs a resurrection.

Run-of-the-mill MLK Day and Black History Month events too often start and end with the “I Have a Dream” King. But on that brisk January morning in Ann Arbor, Davis evoked the “[Beyond Vietnam](#)” King and his condemnation of U.S. warmongering, which has been most often directed at nations of color in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Radical peace activists today should demand that presidential candidates pledge to reallocate money from the immense U.S. military budget and increase spending on things that matter to everyday Americans in New Jersey and across the nation: Public schools, universal childcare, job creation, fighting the opioid and mental health crises, and greater economic support for farmers, families, veterans and small businesses.

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The military-industrial complex takes up the lion's share of the U.S. budget, and the most recent discretionary budget would only make matters worse. In 2018, the United States spent \$648.8 billion to fight wars, keep boots on the ground and maintain military bases on foreign soil. America foots a much larger portion of the tab for policing the world than other nations, including China, Russia and the United Kingdom.

Several months ago, President Trump reportedly told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he would rather spend American dollars on domestic issues than on helping others fight their battles. If that's true, we need a new budget that allocates more to food and agriculture, unemployment and labor, veterans benefits and other issues that affect our daily lives.

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President Eisenhower [warned about the military-industrial complex](#), the alliance of defense contractors and the armed forces that he called a threat to democratic government. Likewise King, in his 1967 book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* asked, “Why have we substituted the arrogant undertaking of policing the whole world for the high task of putting our own house in order?”

This year marks the 100th anniversary of *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil*, a 1920 book by Du Bois, America's most influential anti-war black radical. He reminds us that \$200 million in rubber, cocoa, coffee and other goods were being extracted from Africa before World War I, and that European nations also coveted the prospect of cheap black labor. “Manifestly, it is expansion overseas; it is colonial aggrandizement which explains, and alone adequately explains, the World War,” Du Bois wrote, plainly stating the premise of black anti-war radicalism.

Years later, King, Malcolm X and Jones, a feminist and Communist leader, continued to document and condemn the evils of American and European imperialism. Today Angela Davis, the peace activist who was once on the FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, continues this work by showing that the

homelessness caused by global capitalism, the new imperialism, takes the greatest toll on people of color and women.

If the current or next U.S. president rolls back our costly war machine and leads on global peace, they could free up billions of dollars to improve the lives of hardworking and patriotic Americans, including veterans and their families and those struggling in neglected urban centers like Newark, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. They can also undo a brutal legacy of invading sovereign soil for oil and the cheap labor of black, brown, and yellow people.

Until this happens, let's resurrect the antiwar and pro-peace radicalism represented by these giants of black history and the fight for equality.

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