

Bradley Manning Walking in the Footsteps of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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"The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong. . . that we have been detrimental to . . . life The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways," [said Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) when speaking of the Vietnam War.

The documents that Bradley Manning has been accused of leaking sharpen [the demands of the world](#) upon America and upon ourselves. The classified documents describe the wars in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) as well as [diplomatic cables](#) that show how United States conducts foreign policy. They show a nation that bullies, threatens, blackmails, spies, wantonly kills civilians and commits wars of aggression – if the U.S. were not the world's lone superpower it would be considered [a rogue state](#).

Even in the era of Martin Luther King he described the United States as ["a society gone mad on war"](#) and ["the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."](#) As then, the responsibility is that of the American people to correct. As King said of Vietnam ["The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours."](#)

So, on Martin Luther King Day I [joined 200 people at the Quantico Marine Base](#) where Bradley Manning, an American citizen not convicted of anything, is being [held in solitary confinement](#), not allowed to exercise in his 6 by 12 foot cell, [not given a real pillow](#) or blanket, with [no contact with others](#) except guards who [make sure he does not sleep](#) during the day after they wake him up at 5 in the morning.

Manning is a patriot. He is not accused of giving documents demonstrating criminal and unethical actions by the U.S. to Iran, China or Russia, instead, if the allegations against him are true, he gave them to the media so the American people could learn what its government was doing. He [could have sold the documents](#) to the highest bidder, but instead, he allegedly gave them for free to the media. He could have published them verbatim and put Americans at risk, but instead by allegedly gave them to the media he ensured professional journalists would review them, verify them and weigh their release with national security concerns.

Some argue that Manning should have gone through the chain of command. In fact, [he tried](#). When he first saw 15 Iraqis being tortured by the Iraqi government the U.S. put in power and protects he examined the case and discovered they were being tortured for publishing a scholarly article asking where the money in Iraq went. He brought this to his commander who told him to shut up and [round up more Iraqis](#). Then he saw on the computer screen widespread [war crimes](#). He saw that Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton](#)

[turned the State Department into a nest of spies](#) that [violated the law](#) by spying on UN diplomats. If the criminality goes to the Secretary of State, what is the use of going up the chain of command?

And, look what the [Obama administration has done in response to war crimes](#). When it came to torture, President Obama and his Justice Department said they [did not want to look back](#), but only wanted to look forward, and [decided not to prosecute](#) those who committed torture. When the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility recommended recommending disbaring lawyers who produced legal memoranda to provide false cover for torture, they decided to ignore that recommendation and take [no action against the torture lawyers](#). When a judge held that CIA officers who destroyed evidence, video tapes of torture, we in contempt of court the [administration decided not to prosecute](#).

Now, just as in the time of Dr. King, we must conclude as he did, ["my fellow Americans, who, with me, bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents."](#) Americans of today bear the responsibility for the actions of our government. In a representative democracy the people are responsible for the actions of the government. Now that WikiLeaks has published official reports documenting war crimes, other crimes, unethical behavior and deception of Americans and others, we now know what our government is doing and bear the responsibility to end it.

It is not going to be easy to end a foreign policy that has been off track for many years, indeed many decades. Dr. King accurately described abuses going back to the 1950s. As a result the current wars, as Dr. King said of the Vietnam War are ["a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit."](#) These are deep issues requiring "a true revolution of values" which will "cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies." While this seems like an insurmountable task, in fact there is no reason it cannot be achieved. Indeed, our country has overcome slavery, segregation, women not being allowed to vote, children forced into labor and widespread unfair treatment of workers and farmers. More work is needed in all of these areas but obvious progress is being made.

The war economy can also be ended. As [Dr. King said](#): "There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood." Since President Eisenhower warned us of the military industrial complex, [military spending has doubled in real dollars](#). Under President Obama, the U.S. has produced record military budgets, record intelligence budgets and record arms sales. Now more than half of discretionary spending is for the military. More and more people are seeing the war economy is not working for them and are organizing to cut war spending.

President Obama, when he decided to run for office quoted Dr. King's speech against the Vietnam War where King said ["We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now."](#) What would true leadership look like in response to the WikiLeaks documents? Rather than putting Bradley Manning in pre-trial solitary confinement, a leader would stand with Bradley Manning. A leader would demand the Secretary of State to resign for directing American diplomats to spy. Real leadership would publish the leaked documents and say - 'This is a country of, by and for the people. It is time for us to look in the mirror and see ourselves for what we are. The people now know what American foreign policy does. The people need to discuss and debate this policy. Should America act within the law or should it ignore the

law? Should we threaten and bribe other countries or work with countries to develop policies that make sense for the world? It is time for a great debate. It is time for real change.”

Bradley Manning, a young man from Oklahoma, believed as many Americans do, that the U.S. is a force for good in the world. It was not until he was in Iraq and when he saw documents and videos crossing his computer screen that he realized America does not play the role he had been told. [Dr. King quoted Langston Hughes](#) in his speech:

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Yes, “America will be” but only if we make it so. Americans need to support a true American patriot, Bradley Manning, if he did what he is accused, has put his life on the line to show us the truth about American foreign policy and to make us a better nation. Visit www.BradleyManing.org to join in his defense. And, then read the WikiLeaks documents and engage in discussion and debate with your fellow Americans. Join our efforts to change U.S. foreign policy

To stand with Bradley visit: [Stand With Brad](#).

To prevent prosecution of WikiLeaks visit: WikiLeaksIsDemocracy.org

To get involved with efforts to end war and reduce military spending visit www.VotersForPeace.US.

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