

**Martin Luther King Memorial Community Reading**  
**“Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence”**  
**Public shared reading in 16 parts**

April 5, 2016 – Oakland, CA

***INTRODUCTION TO READING***

We are gathered here today to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 48th anniversary of his assassination; to call for an end to U.S. wars and occupations around the world; an end to militarization of police in communities across the country, and an end to the violence, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and gender identity oppression in our society.

When Dr. King made his prophetic speech, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” exactly one year before his death, the United States was embroiled in the Vietnam War. The country was in turmoil as peace activists resisted the draft, and anti-war and civil rights protesters took to the streets. King’s speech laid bare the relationship between U.S. wars abroad and the racism and poverty being challenged by the civil rights movement at home. And it was controversial in some parts of the civil rights movement.

Today, the U.S. continues to wage wars around the world and military spending is increasing, with the Administration’s 2017 budget request for the Pentagon, nuclear weapons and aid to foreign militaries rising to nearly \$623 billion. The endless wars have cost millions of lives and trillions of dollars, while the needs of growing numbers of Americans go unmet.

On this Day of Global Action Against Military Spending, we call on our country to change course and turn towards humanity, law and decency. We honor the **full** legacy of Dr. King’s work opposing militarism, racism and poverty - the “axis of evil” in the struggle for peace and justice.

We will now read the complete text of Dr. King’s speech, ***Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence***, which he delivered on April 4, 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned, at Riverside Church in New York City, exactly one year before his tragic assassination.

We believe that Dr. King’s words were both precautionary and prophetic, providing both a diagnosis and a cure – “a true revolution of values” – for our society’s gravest illnesses, “the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism.”