

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

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SL: [Guest Post] My Granny Annie

This Juneteenth, It's Time to Ask: What Is Security?

Tomorrow is Juneteenth — a day to commemorate emancipation from the horrors of slavery in the United States. This week, a new law was passed [declaring](#) Juneteenth a national holiday. It's a worthy step forward for an important day of remembrance. But while progress is made on these symbolic fronts, the struggle for material change toward Black liberation has not been so easy. In honor of Juneteenth, we bring you a guest post from our Senior Digital Associate Annika London, exploring one key facet of this struggle: how the nation defines "security" — and what that means for Black people, here and abroad.

This article has been adapted from its original publication in [Inkstick](#).

In 1961, as the [Freedom Riders](#) traversed the South in a fight for their civil rights, my Granny Annie packed her 5 youngest children and as many belongings as they could fit into their car and left Mississippi for Illinois. They left behind many of their extended family, along with their little farm and the crucial self-sufficiency it provided them given their impoverished circumstances. While Illinois offered many hopes of a better life, she had no guarantees of obtaining decent housing and enough work to sustain her family as a single mother.

As daunting as this journey was, it was just one of so many that millions of African Americans made during a time that some historians consider to be a second wave of the [Great Migration](#). There were no doubt countless different dreams visible on the horizon for Annie and all the others who made this journey, but all of them perhaps intersected at one core wish for security in its many forms: political, economic, community, personal, and more.

The United States seems obsessed with the idea of security — a security only for a few — and as a result, no level of devastation and pain wrought by our militaristic foreign policy abroad goes too far. Our endless [drone wars](#) across the Middle East and West Africa are "crucial." The warmongers in our government thirsty for conflict with Iran and China are "justified." The United States's heinous [blanket sanctions](#) crushing already vulnerable populations in Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea are "essential" for our broader strategy. All of these actions — those in power say — are necessary for our national security.

Given this almost cultish dedication to national security by whatever means necessary, it's worth asking: What exactly do we mean by security?

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Is it only about safety from perceived “foreign enemies”? Is it about securing our democratic values and different constitutional rights, or the preservation of our basic human rights to dignity, justice and peace? Is it meant to include accessible education opportunities, career prospects and economic security? Is it about a guarantee to secure housing and healthcare?

I’m sure Annie had her own distinct ideas about what security felt like, stemming from the experience of having it ripped out of her hands — and all Black people’s hands — everywhere across the country, and especially in the South.

The entire purpose of [Jim Crow](#) was to eradicate every pathway to every form of security that Black people needed. Voting rights and the right to equal protection under the law were meticulously broken down. The economic opportunities Black communities needed in order to survive post-Civil War [were picked apart](#). Those who dared to build their own new pathways risked brutal retaliation from the country’s racist legal systems, police and prison institutions, and white civilians who knew they would be celebrated, not held to account, for their racism. Hence, the Great Migration era witnessed millions of African Americans fleeing the South in search of a chance for security elsewhere.

I can only imagine the magnitude of the fear hanging over Annie as she made her choice to leave the insecurity she faced in Mississippi. In a haunting coincidence, my father shares Emmett Till’s July 25 birthday and was born the year Emmett was [slaughtered](#) in 1955, in the same state. When Annie looked at her baby boy, did she see Emmett’s face shining with happy eyes and a bright smile in his family photos, or did she see Emmett’s broken face as he lay in that open casket? As violence escalated in response to growing racial justice movements over the following years, did she fear that the chances of her children having secure futures would be extinguished altogether?

As Granny Annie was making her choice and preparing to move, her oldest child was [in Vietnam](#). As her son was ordered to destroy Vietnamese families in the name of U.S. security, she was attempting to find security for her family at home — in a country that has never wanted Black people to have it.

Vietnam: one of so many moments in which the United States has attempted to argue that the abhorrent bloodshed and agony forced upon a people half a world away would be worthwhile for the sake of achieving security at home. Black people know that’s a lie though — we can feel the lie in the intergenerational trauma passed to us from our ancestors and as we continue to endure the racist brutality of this country.

Today, our voting rights are again under widespread [attack](#). We are still [targeted](#) and punished when we attempt to practice our right to protest. We continue to be met with an endless gambit of anti-Black barriers in our education, careers, housing searches, and healthcare needs. Black athletes, singers, and other celebrities who use their platforms to call for change are vitriolically labeled as threats to the “American way of life.” Our lives are being shot and choked out of us, and our broken bodies left behind are spectacles on social media and news outlets. Our cruel

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deaths always come with a remarkable show of mental gymnastics from white America as they grasp for any reason to explain why we deserve to die.

The United States will never achieve true national security so long as it believes that the lives of people of color, here and abroad, must be destroyed in order to accomplish this goal. To the complete contrary, Black voices — along with those from other racial minority groups — are key to defining what true security feels like and what must happen within the United States in order to cultivate and protect it here and everywhere.

Annie knew what security meant for her family. She wanted her children to be able to play outside in their neighborhood safely. She wanted them to go to a school that would welcome them into safe spaces. She wanted her sons to not end up like Emmett Till, and her daughters to not end up like the girls at Birmingham [16th St. Baptist Church](#). She wanted them to make it to adulthood, and to build thriving lives for themselves that wouldn't end up derailed by white supremacy.

Black people may each define security differently based on their personal circumstances, needs, and dreams. But what Annie wanted is no doubt at least similar to what many others have always wanted, and continue to fight for. We want them not just as Black people, but as human beings who deserve to have our human rights met. And security, at its truest core, is a human right.

One Step Closer to Ending Endless War 🎉

This week, the House of Representatives voted 268 to 161 to [pass](#) Rep. Barbara Lee's bill to repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against Iraq. This outdated legal authorization has been twisted beyond its original purpose for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq to help justify the United States waging endless war and committing international assassinations in multiple countries. Now, with the repeal bill having passed the House, and President Biden's [declared](#) support, we have a real opportunity to take this shameful, 18-year-old war authorization off the books once and for all. If Senator Schumer lives up to the [promise he made this week](#) to bring up Congresswoman Lee's legislation for a floor vote, we'll be one step closer to heeding Annika's lesson and shifting our understanding of what keeps us safe (it's no coincidence that, for nearly 20 years, it has been a Black woman [leading the fight](#) — often alone — against endless war at home and abroad).

BURIED LEDES

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This Sunday is World Refugee Day — a good day to remember not only that we have a moral obligation to provide justice for refugees and asylum seekers, but also that our own foreign policy is often the very reason for their [displacement](#).

While you wouldn't know it from listening to the beltway discourse, **Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is [incredibly popular](#)**. Just more evidence that it's well past time to democratize U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. federal agents [admitted](#) this week to falsely accusing a Chinese-born university professor of being a spy — yet more racist fallout from the dangerous, bipartisan Cold War with China...

... **a new Cold War that would be devastating for the people of the United States and China alike**. But don't take our word for it, take [Bernie Sanders's](#).

China's not the only great power the U.S. wants to duke it out with. **Relations between the United States and Russia are at a particularly perilous moment**. [Here's](#) how we start to heal the fractured relationship.

The United States bears great responsibility for the devastating crisis in Yemen. The *least* — and we mean *least* — we can do is not deport Yemenis back into a dire situation. **Win Without War joins over 100 organizations [calling to extend and redesignate](#) Temporary Protected Status for Yemen**.

Following the January 6 Capitol insurrection, **arms manufacturer Boeing swore off donations to members of Congress who tried to overturn the election**. That's nice and all (coming from one of the most evil corporations on earth)... **except it hardly [lasted](#) a few months**.

The G7 has agreed to a major reform of global corporate taxation policy. Surprise: their proposal largely [benefits](#) the G7 countries, instead of the poorer nations that need it most.

We've said it before and we'll say it again: blanket sanctions are a tool of collective punishment. It's time to get rid of them. **Kudos to Rep. McGovern for [calling to end](#) the suffocating U.S. sanctions on Venezuela**.

And finally, pandemic travel restrictions got you down? **Travel the world culinary scene from your desk with [Restaurant Bot](#)**.