

shifted in the 1970s. From the Atlantic and the Pacific in the 1950s and the '60s, it shifted in the 1970s to the areas bounded by the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans (i.e., the Middle East and southern Africa). You would recall that the Rapid Deployment Force and the new modernized navy were designed at the Middle East. At the beginning, a sixty thousand [person] Rapid Deployment Force, which by the Carter administration had reached two hundred thousand, and by Reagan had reached three hundred and fifty thousand. Much of the troops under the Rapid Deployment Force are now mobilized for this. You would recall that Saudi Arabia has been requested to provide bases since 1975, and had refused it. You would recall that Iran was built into a major force as part of America's southern strategy on the eastern flank of the oil belt (and Israel on the western flank).

I am merely suggesting that it is the great achievement of President Saddam Hussein that he opened the doors wide to American intervention. Those people who somehow think that Saddam Hussein has done something anti-imperialistic are thinking it wrong. Saddam Hussein is not only a tyrant and a dictator, he is also a fool. And that fool has created this situation.

Finally, I'll leave you with one simple suggestion: this is a war about staying number one. And this is a war about control of oil. And staying number one and controlling oil are not directed at the Arabs. It is directed at two large forces: Europe and the Third World. For the United States had exercised two leverages on its Western allies: the leverage of strategic weaponry (the strategic umbrella) and the leverage of economic dominance. It has lost both of them. Since 1970, American policy makers have been seeking new leverages over old allies—and control of oil will give that. And, over the Third World the United States would like to both have the leverage of oil and establish the principle that it remains—in the age of perestroika—the watchman on the walls of world freedom. Shall we let them have it? That's up to you.

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The black feminist writer and activist June Jordan wrote of ordinary people's loves, desires, struggles, and passions—both personal and political. Jordan, who died of breast cancer in June 2002, was also an internationalist, committed to breaking down boundaries of nation and ethnicity. As her friend Alice Walker said, she was “an inhabitant of the entire universe.” On February 21, 1991, the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, she spoke at a rally in Hayward, California, against the war in the Gulf.

June Jordan Speaks Out Against the 1991 Gulf War (February 21, 1991)³

Correct me if I'm wrong, but this killer crusade, this conversion of a stranger's land into a killing field, this reduction of a people to a video display, this homicidal rhetoric that history does not support, that our common destiny is certain to condemn, this war has not saved one human being. This war has not saved a single American life. This war has not saved a single Israeli life. This a war has not saved a single Iraqi life. This war has not rescued the lives of Kuwait. This grand undertaking, this enormous, this infinitely casual overkill, this draining of our hearts, this annihilation of all tenderness, this erasure of every reason, every rational and civilized approach to dispute, this arched and leering assault upon all peaceable possibilities, this blasphemy unleashed against our shrunken trembling earth, that has become in the hellified lexicon of the killers ruling us, a target-rich environment, this war has not saved one human being from terror or from unspeakable agonies of extinction. Then, why do we permit this blasphemy to persist, expand, and explode our body politic as well as the entire Middle East? I grieve the sorrow roar, the sorrow sob. I grieve the monstrous consequences of this war. . . .

[But] I am reassured because not every American has lost her mind or his soul. Not every one of my compatriots who become a flag-wrapped lunatic, lusting after oil and power, the perversions of kicking ass, preferably via TV. A huge number of Americans has joined with enormous numbers of Arab peoples and European communities in Germany, England, France, Italy, Spain, and Muslim communities throughout India and Pakistan to cry out "Stop!" When I say huge, I mean it. If 1,000 Americans contacted by some pollster can be said to represent 250 million people, then how many multi-, multi-millions do we anti-war movement gatherings of more than 100,000 coast to coast and on every continent, how many do we represent? How come nobody ever does that kind of political math? Tonight, February 21, 1991, when yet again, the ruling white men of America despise peace and sneer at negotiations and intensify their arms-length arm-chair prosecution of this evil war, this display of racist value system that will never allow for any nationalism that is not their own and that will never allow third-world countries to control their own natural resources and that will never ever express—let alone feel—regret or remorse or shame or horror at the loss of any human life that is not white. Tonight, I am particularly proud to be an African American. By launching the heaviest air assault in history against Iraq on January 15, George Bush dared to desecrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tonight, and 83,000 bombing missions later, is the twenty-sixth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X. On this sorry evening, the world has seen the

pathological real deal behind the sanctimonious rhetoric of Bush and Company. The Persian Gulf War is not about Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. The war is not about Kuwait at all. Clearly, it's not about international law or respect or United Nations resolutions, since by comparison to Washington and Pretoria, the Butcher of Baghdad is a minor league Johnny-come-lately to the realm of out-law conduct and contempt for world opinion. What has happened tonight is that the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev and the government of Iraq have reached an agreement whereby Iraq will withdraw from Kuwait, and that is a fact regardless of anything else included or omitted by the proposal. This agreement should provide for immediate ceasefire, a cessation to the slaughter of Iraqi men and women, and a halt to the demolition nationwide of their water supply, the access to food and security. What is the response of the number one white man in America? He's gone off to the theater. I guess that means that the nearest church was closed. Or that Colin Powell was busy dipping his spoon into the comfort of a pot of soup somebody else cooked for him. And that Dick Cheney was fit to be tied into any uniform so long as nobody would take away his Patriot missiles and Apache helicopters, and B-52 cluster bombers, and black and brown and poor white soldiers and sailors, and all of the rest of these toys for a truly big-time coward. Confronted with the nightmare prospect of peace, Bush goes off to the theater because he will be damned if he will acknowledge that Saddam Hussein is a man, is the head of a sovereign state, is an enemy to be reckoned with, an opponent with whom one must negotiate. Saddam is not a white man. He and his Arab peoples must be destroyed. No peace, no cease-fire, no negotiations.

And I am proud tonight to remember Dr. King and Malcolm X and to mourn their actions even as I pursue the difficult challenge of their legacy. Both of these men became the targets of white wrath when they in their different ways developed into global visionaries persisting against racism in Alabama, in Harlem, in South Africa, in Vietnam. Neither of these men could have failed to condemn this current attack against the Arab world. Neither of these men ever condoned anything less than equal justice and equal rights.

Hence, the undeniably racist double standards now levied against Saddam Hussein would have appalled and alienated both of them completely. I am proud to shake hands with the increasing number of African-American conscientious objectors. I am proud to remark the steadfast moral certainty of the United States Congressman Ronald Dellums's opposition to the war. I am proud to hear about the conscientious objections of Congressmen Gus Savage, and John Conyers, and Mervyn [Dymally] as I am proud to observe that even while African Americans remain disproportionately represented in the United States armed forces, we as a national community stand distinct, despite and apart from all vagaries of popu-

lar opinion. We maintain a proportionately higher level of opposition to this horrible war, this horrendous evasion of domestic degeneration and decay.

I want to say something else specific to you, Mr. President. It's true you can humiliate and you can hound and you can smash and burn and terrify and smirk and boast and defame and demonize and dismiss and incinerate and starve, and yes, you can force somebody—force a people to surrender . . . what happens to remain of their bloody bowels into your grasping, bony, dry hands. But all of us who are weak, we watch you. And we learn from your hatred, and we do not forget. And we are ready, Mr. President. We are most of the people on this god-forsaken planet.

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At great risk to themselves, more than 220 soldiers declared themselves conscientious objectors to the 1991 Gulf War. Among the most eloquent was a Kansas doctor, Yolanda Huet-Vaughn. Huet-Vaughn, an immigrant from Mexico, had served five years in the military before receiving an honorable discharge in 1982. In 1989, she enlisted in the army reserves, and, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, was called up to go to Saudi Arabia. In the statement below, Huet-Vaughn explains her reasons for opposing the build-up to the eventual U.S. war against Iraq. As a result of her stance, she was identified as a "deserter," placed under house arrest for four months, court martialled, and sentenced to thirty months in prison. After Amnesty International labeled Huet-Vaughn a "prisoner of conscience" and organized a campaign around her case, she was released, having served eight months.

Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, Statement Refusing to Serve in the 1991 Gulf War (January 9, 1991)⁴

I, Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, M.D., am a board-certified family physician, a wife, a mother of three children ages two, five, and eight. I am also a member since 1980 of Physicians for Social Responsibility, the U.S. affiliate of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. In 1982 I co-founded the Greater Kansas City Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility. I am from Kansas City, Kansas. I am a captain in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps. In connection with the Gulf crisis I was called to active duty service in December 1990.

I am refusing orders to be an accomplice in what I consider an immoral, inhumane, and unconstitutional act, namely an offensive military mobilization in the