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# OPINION

## Being Accountable for Our Military Interventions

### Americans must accept responsibility

BY JARED KEYEL

The United States must accept responsibility for the damage its military actions have caused and recognize there are alternatives for the future.

In the nearly decade and a half since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the U. S. has invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, carried out bombing campaigns throughout the Middle East, and launched special operations strikes throughout the world.

These policies are non-par-



tisan. Many military actions begun under George W. Bush have continued and intensified under Barack Obama. The CIA-led drone wars in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen are a key component of Mr. Obama's administration and the use of U.S. Special Forces has exploded in recent years, deploying to 134 countries in 2013.

The consequences of these actions are immense. In the words of 13-year-old Yemeni, Mohammed Tuaiman, U.S. drone strikes have "turned our area into hell and continuous horror, day and night, we even dream of them in our sleep

Mohammed, like his father and brother, was later killed by an American drone. Fourteen-year-old Zubair Ur Rehman, whose grandmother was

killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan, told five members of Congress in 2103, "I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I like gray skies; the drones cannot fly when the skies are gray."

Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American affiliate of Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, recently released a report that estimates at least 1.3 million people have died as a result of the U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the violent spillover into Pakistan.

U.S. policies have not brought stability to countries such as Afghanistan or Yemen and as the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has shown, U.S. military actions have fanned the flames of terrorism, not extinguished them.

There is no doubt that many Americans believe our military interventions are undertaken to help others around the world. Unfortunately, the reality is far different. From Afghanistan to Libya, our military interventions have left broken lives and nations in ruins. It may be surprising to some Americans, but a 2013 Gallup poll of 65 countries saw the United States at the top of the list of greatest threats to world peace.

We as Americans need to take that perception seriously and accept responsibility for the enormous human suffering our wars and interventions have caused.

Most Americans have a genuine desire to help and not hurt others around the world. We can work to alleviate the injury we have already caused by providing more support for

emergency humanitarian aid and refugee protection and resettlement, more funding to allow the societies we have torn apart to rebuild themselves, and by engaged, multilateral, diplomacy to try to end ongoing violence.

We need to push our government, no matter which party is currently in power, to live up to our obligations under international law and end the pervasive use of military force. We have relied on military means too widely and too belligerently and it is time to chart a different course.

*Jared Keyel has a background in International Relations and Middle Eastern Affairs and currently works with refugees, asylum-seekers, and immigrants in Chicago, and is syndicated through PeaceVoice.*

## Baltimore Rising: Women at the Frontline for Justice

### I applaud these female leaders in the fight

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Marilyn Mosby was sworn into office as Maryland state's attorney for Baltimore City in January of this year at the Baltimore War Memorial Plaza building. Before unseating the incumbent, Gregg Bernstein, for the job, the 35-year-old had never held an elected office.

Five months later, the city's newly-minted, top prosecutor—the youngest chief prosecutor in any major American city—returned to the steps of the War Memorial Plaza to announce charges, including murder, manslaughter and assault, against six police officers in the unwarranted death of Freddie Gray—simultaneously emerging into the national spotlight as an advocate for those demanding police accountability and an adversary for those who would protect the status quo.

On the night of her swearing in, Mosby was joined by a host



of dignitaries, including her husband, Baltimore City councilman Nick Mosby—who represents the West Baltimore area that has been the backdrop to the protests over Gray's death—along with her two daughters. Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake also sat among the evening's guests and, in a speech, advised Mosby that, "Public service is not just a job, it's a calling and it is a privilege."

Mosby's calling to public service was born of tragedy and tradition. When Mosby was 14, her 17-year-old cousin was mistaken for a drug dealer and shot and killed near her home. She often credits her cousin's murder as the reason why she decided to become a prosecutor.

She also comes from a five-generation long line of law enforcement officials. Both of her parents, an aunt, four uncles and her grandfather—who was a founding member of the first association of black police officers in her hometown of Massachusetts—were police officers.

Growing up in a family of cops, Mosby knows the good,

good police officers can do in our communities. She indicted six police officers, not an entire force. Her actions are not anti-cop; they are pro-police and law enforcement accountability. She assured the public—and the nation—that her administration is, "committed to creating a fair and equitable justice system for all. No matter what your occupation, your age, your race, your color or your creed."

Like any major American city, Baltimore has its assets and its challenges. Its mayor, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, has been at the frontline, grappling with the deeply entrenched challenges of the city left in her charge since replacing a former mayor, who resigned under charges of corruption, then being elected to her first full term as mayor in 2011. She has been touched by the almost inescapable violence that stems from these challenges when in 2002, she found her brother covered in blood and nearly decapitated by a sword that was used during a carjacking in front of her house.

In her 2014 State of Black America essay, Mayor Raw-

lings-Blake painted a bleak picture, noting that in Baltimore city, more than 1 in 5 African-American adult residents live in poverty, while 1 in every 3 African-American children and teens are also living in poverty. She warned that, "Poverty is a deep-rooted ill, permeated with inequity, and it will take a focused, concerted assault on all fronts to excise it. We must think outside the box, and be bold as we confront the challenges that lie in our path. I am committed to the fight."

Mayor Rawlings-Blake—the daughter of the legendary Howard "Pete" Rawlings, the first African American to become chair of the Appropriations Committee in the Maryland House of Delegates—has made her name on the national stage. She is only one of two black female mayors of the 100 largest cities in the country. She currently serves as secretary of the Democratic National Committee and is vice president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

But she is grabbing our attention today, not for her impressive resume, but for her unflagging commitment to "the

fight" in Baltimore for equality and justice. As she promised in a recent press conference, "As mayor, I will be relentless in changing the culture of the police department to ensure that everyone in our city is treated equally under the law."

Now that the six officers involved in the death of Freddie Gray have been charged, the prosecutor's office will present its case to a city grand jury that will consider the charges and decide whether to indict. At the same time, the Department of Justice—now being led by another African-American woman, Loretta Lynch—is also conducting an investigation into the case and into the Baltimore Police Department.

I applaud these women, and all women—and men—who are fighting for justice for Freddie and, by extension, for us. I applaud these leaders as they claim their place in the pantheon of black female fighters who have traditionally played a key role in our nation's struggle for equality and justice—for all.

*Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.*