

A Day of Service is a Disservice to the Truth of MLK's Life, Death, and Witness

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January 14, 2017



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“Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (1963)

As Martin Luther King's birthday is celebrated with a national holiday, his death day disappears down the memory hole. Across the country—in response to the King Holiday and Service Act passed by Congress and signed by Bill Clinton in 1994—people will be encouraged to make the day one of service (from Latin, *servus* = slave). Etymological irony aside, such service does not include King's commitment to protesting a decadent system of racial and economic injustice or non-violently resisting the warfare state that is the United States. Government sponsored service is cultural neo-liberalism at its finest.

The word service is a loaded word. It connotes many things, such as military service (“Were you ever in the service?”), community service (“She was sentenced to 30 days of community service.”), being of service to others, etc. It has also become a vogue word over the past 25 years—e.g. Service Learning (1995), etc. Its popularity and use arose and expanded in tandem with the privatization of social life, services, and the expansion of work for free, such as unpaid internships and articles like this for which this author receives no remuneration. I see it as part of the privatization and unpaid volunteer movement engineered by the elites in recent decades. This cult of the service volunteer is a form of social control and capitalist exploitation aimed at inducing passivity in an individualized and divided population to prevent radical social change.

Its use for MLK Day is clear: individuals are encouraged to volunteer for activities such as tutoring children, painting senior centers, or delivering meals to the elderly. Clearly these are wonderful

deeds when done on individual initiative and not through government, corporate, and institutional public relations aimed at concealing an American prophet's radical message and his brutal assassination.

The [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#) describes it as follows:

The [MLK Day of Service](#) is part of [United We Serve](#), the Presidents national call to service initiative. It calls for Americans from all walks of life to work together to provide solutions to our most pressing national problems. The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions to social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a 'Beloved Community'.

This is sheer nonsense. Such service is a far cry from King's campaign to transform the **institutional structures** of American society. It in no way provides solutions to "our most pressing national problems" or "creates solutions to social problems." But a day of such individual volunteer service once a year does make people feel good about themselves. Thus the government, corporate, and educational institutions strongly encourage it, as if Martin Luther King were born volunteering at the local food pantry and Oprah Winfrey were cheering him on.

After all, King was not assassinated because he had spent his heroic life promoting individual volunteerism. To understand his life and death—to celebrate the man—"it is essential to realize although he is popularly depicted and perceived as a civil rights leader, he was much more than that. A non-violent **revolutionary**, he personified the most powerful force for a long overdue social, political, and economic reconstruction of the nation." Those are the words of William Pepper, the King family lawyer, from his comprehensive and definitive study of the King assassination, [The Plot to Kill King](#).

In other words, Martin Luther King was a transmitter of a radical non-violent spiritual and political energy so plenipotent that his very existence was a threat to an established order based on institutionalized violence, racism, and economic exploitation. He was a very dangerous man to the U.S. government and all the institutional and deep state forces armed against him. That is why they spied on him (and his father and grandfather [going back to 1917](#)) and used dirty tricks to try to destroy him. When he [denounced the Vietnam War](#) and announced his [Poor People's Campaign](#) and intent to lead a massive peaceful encampment of hundreds of thousands in Washington, D.C., he set off panic in the bowels of government spies and their masters. As Stokely Carmichael, co-chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, said to King in a conversation [secretly recorded by Army Intelligence](#), "The man don't care you call ghettos concentration camps, but when you tell him his war machine is nothing but hired killers, you got trouble."

Revolutionaries are, of course, anathema to the power elites who, with all their might, resist such rebels' efforts to transform society. If they can't buy them off, they knock them off. Forty-nine years after King's assassination, the causes he fought for—civil rights, the end to U.S. wars of aggression, and economic justice for all—remain not only unfulfilled, but have worsened in so many respects.

And King's message has been enervated by the sly trick of giving him a national holiday and then urging Americans to make it "a day of service." The vast majority of those who innocently participate in these activities have no idea who killed King, or why. If they did, they might pause in their tracks, suspend their "service" activities, and convene a teach-in on the truth of these matters. [William Pepper](#) would be summoned.

Because MLK repeatedly called the United States the "[greatest purveyor of violence on earth](#)," he was universally condemned by the mass media and government that later—once he was long and safely dead and no longer a threat—praised him to the heavens. This has continued to the present day of historical amnesia.

For the government that honors Dr. King with a national holiday killed him. This is the suppressed truth behind the highly promoted day of service. It is what you are not supposed to know.

If you are supposed to know anything about his death day as you go about your day of service, it is the following.

King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 at 6:01 PM as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He was shot in the lower right side of his face by one rifle bullet that shattered his jaw, damaged his upper spine, and came to rest below his left shoulder blade. The U. S. government claimed the assassin was a racist loner named James Earl Ray, a petty criminal, who had escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967. Ray was alleged to have fired the fatal shot from a second-floor bathroom window of a rooming house above the rear of Jim's Grill across the street. Running to his rented room, Ray allegedly gathered his belongings, including the rifle, in a bedspread-wrapped bundle, rushed out the front door onto the adjoining street, and in a panic dropped the bundle in the doorway of the Canipe Amusement Company a few doors down. He was then said to have jumped into his white Mustang and driven to Atlanta where he abandoned the car. From there he fled to Canada and then England where he was eventually arrested at Heathrow Airport on June 8, 1968 and extradited to the U.S. The state claims that the money Ray needed to purchase the car and for all his travel was secured through various robberies and a bank heist. They allege that he was motivated by racism and that he was a bitter and deranged loner.

However, William Pepper's decades-long investigation not only refutes the flimsy case against James Earl Ray, but definitively proves that King was killed by a government conspiracy led by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, Army Intelligence, and Memphis Police, assisted by southern Mafia figures. He is right to assert that "we have probably acquired more detailed knowledge about this political assassination than we have ever had about any previous historical event." This makes the silence around this case even more shocking.

This shock is accentuated when one is reminded (or told for the first time) that [in 1999 a Memphis jury, after a thirty day trial with over seventy witnesses, found the U.S. government guilty in the killing of MLK](#). The King family had brought the suit and Pepper represented them. [They were grateful that the truth was confirmed](#), but saddened by the way the findings were buried once again

by a media in cahoots with the government.

The civil trial was the King family's last resort to get a public hearing to disclose the truth of the assassination. They and Pepper knew, and proved, that Ray was an innocent pawn, but Ray had died in prison in 1998 after trying for thirty years to get a trial and prove his innocence (shades of Sirhan Sirhan, [who still languishes in prison](#) seeking a new trial). During all these years, Ray had maintained that he had been manipulated by a shadowy figure named Raul, who supplied him with money and his white Mustang and coordinated all his complicated travels, including having him buy a rifle and come to Jim's Grill and the boarding house on the day of the assassination to give it to Raul. The government has always denied Raul existed.

Pepper refutes the government and proves beyond a shadow of a doubt, through multiple witnesses, telephonic and photographic evidence, [that Raul existed; that he was Ray's U.S. intelligence handler](#), who provided him with money and instructions from their first meeting in the Neptune Bar in Montreal, where Ray had fled in 1967 after his prison escape, until the day of the assassination. It was Raul who instructed Ray to return to the U.S. (an act that makes no sense for an escaped prisoner who had fled the country), gave him the money for the white Mustang, helped him attain travel documents, and moved him around the country like a pawn on a chess board.

Raul, this man who allegedly never "existed," has also been tied by multiple reliable witnesses to Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald's killer, and therefore to the JFK assassination. This, too, is history you are not supposed to know.

Pepper not only demolishes the government's self-serving case with a plethora of evidence, he shows how the mainstream media, academia, and government flacks have spent years covering up the truth of MLK's murder through lies and disinformation. Another way they have accomplished this is by convincing a gullible public that "service" is a substitute for truth. As Douglass Valentine points out in his important new book, [The CIA as Organized Crime](#), the symbolic transformation involved in word usage and the archetypal power of myth creation underlie the vast system of propaganda we are subjected to. And the implied power of "positive thinking"—as in "service"—is a case in point.

But service without truth is slavery. It is propaganda aimed at convincing decent people into thinking that they are serving the essence of Martin Luther King's message while they are obeying their masters, the very government that murdered this great American hero.

It is time for a slaves' revolt against the mind manipulation served by the MLK Day of Service.

We need a Martin Luther King Day of Truth.

See Also:

- Extensive live press conference on the [Gary Null Show](#), 6-21-16 simultaneous with release of William Pepper's [The Plot to Kill King: The Truth Behind the Assassination of Martin Luther King](#)

Jr, presenting new evidence that demands a revision of the history behind the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

- [Complete Transcript](#) of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Assassination Conspiracy Trial, November 15 to December 8, 1999, Memphis, Tennessee
- [The Martin Luther King Conspiracy Exposed in Memphis](#) by Jim Douglass, Spring 2000, *Probe Magazine*, a penetrating exploration and accounting of the 20th Century's true "trial of the century". September 2012: New links added to directly reference the 1999 Trial in Memphis transcript.
- [King and the Cross](#), a Reflection by Jim Douglass at the Holy Week Faith and Resistance Retreat in Washington DC, April 2007.

Martin Luther King's last book, *The Trumpet of Conscience*, published after his death, began to help me understand why he was killed. In his series of lectures delivered over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in late 1967, Dr. King envisioned first a national, then a global nonviolent revolution against corporate wealth and military power. He wrote:

Nonviolent protest must now mature to a new level to correspond to heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. This higher level is mass civil disobedience. There must be more than a statement to the larger society; there must be a force that interrupts its functioning at some key point ... It must be open and, above all, conducted by large masses without violence. If the jails are filled to thwart it, its meaning will become even clearer.

Mass civil disobedience as a new stage of struggle can transmute the deep rage of the ghetto into a constructive and creative force. To dislocate the functioning of a city without destroying it can be more effective than a riot because it can be longer-lasting, costly to the larger society, but not wantonly destructive. Finally, it is a device of social action that is more difficult for the government to quell by superior force.

As the U.S. government knew well, King wasn't just talking about "dislocating the functioning of a city without destroying it." That was a concrete plan he and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference had for the Poor People's Campaign here in Washington, DC, the following spring of 1968. They wanted to dislocate the functioning of Washington until the government took the steps necessary to abolish poverty in this country.

- [The Converging Martyrdom of Malcolm and Martin](#), Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture, Princeton Theological Seminary, by Jim Douglass, 3-29-06.

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were both executed by what Dr. King described, at the height of the Vietnam War, as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today – my own government." While our government waged a criminal war in Southeast Asia, in which the poor, largely people of color, of the United States fought the poor of Vietnam on behalf of a military-industrial complex, our two greatest prophets resisted that systemic, racist evil with their whole lives. Malcolm and Martin came to see the entire Cold War as a scam, in which a corporate, racist power dominated as much of the world as it could by lying about both itself and its ideological enemy. Our prophets of change, Malcolm and Martin, were then spied on and undermined by government agencies in ways that led, step by step, to their murders.