

## King and the Cross

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A Reflection by Jim Douglass [at the Holy Week Faith and Resistance Retreat in Washington DC, April 2007](#)

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*When we realized that we were beginning this retreat on the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech at Riverside Church in NYC, and the thirty-ninth anniversary of King's assassination, there seemed no other choice for a resource person for this retreat than Jim Douglass, who has spent a good part of the last 12 years of his life understanding the connection between the speech and that assassination. Jim and Shelley are long time activists, founders of the original [Pacific Life Community](#)[1] and inspiration for the [Atlantic Life Community](#). [2]*

Forty years ago tonight at Riverside Church, Martin Luther King gave the speech of his life, "[Beyond Vietnam](#)," that took him beyond civil rights, beyond political calculation, and in the eyes of our violent system, beyond redemption.[3] With that speech that drew a prophetic line between real peace and our national security state, King went beyond his own security net as a civil rights leader. He became a national security threat. At Riverside Church he went not only beyond Vietnam but also beyond any hold he had on a future of his own. As we can see from the rest of his journey, and from the government's plot to kill him, that speech marked the beginning of his walk to Calvary that would end one year later, thirty-nine years ago tonight.

After the Riverside Church Address, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote a memorandum to President Lyndon Johnson stating:

Based on King's recent activities and public utterances, it is clear that he is an instrument in the hands of subversive forces seeking to undermine our nation.[4]

At Riverside Church, by going beyond Vietnam to identify "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government," Martin Luther King became a target for assassination by that same government.

It has taken me a long time to see just how important the assassination of Martin Luther King was. When it happened, I was a thirty-year-old professor of religion at the University of Hawaii. I had a seminar on "The Theology of Peace" with a dozen students. At our first class after Dr. King was killed, several of the students failed to show up on time. When they

came in, they made an announcement to the class. They said that in response to the assassination of King, who had given his life for peace and justice, they had held an impromptu rally on campus. At the rally they had burned their draft cards, thereby becoming liable to years in prison. They said they were now forming the Hawaii Resistance. They asked if I would like to join their group. It was a friendly invitation, but it bore the implication: “Put up or shut up, Mr. Professor of Nonviolence.”

A month later, we sat in front of a convoy of trucks taking the members of the Hawaii National Guard to Oahu’s Jungle Warfare Training Center, on their way to the jungles of Vietnam. I went to jail for two weeks—the beginning of the end of my academic career. Members of the Hawaii Resistance served from six months to two years in prison for their draft resistance, or wound up going into exile in Sweden or Canada.

Martin Luther King’s martyrdom was our baptism into nonviolence as a way of life. But our beginning choice of nonviolence did not mean we recognized the deeper questions King’s murder opened up. If one kept on probing his assassination, one would wind up at the cross, in spite of our government’s efforts to bury that cross forever.

Martin Luther King’s last book, *The Trumpet of Conscience*,<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

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.<sup>[7]</sup> They wanted to dislocate the functioning of Washington until the government took the steps necessary to abolish poverty in this country.

King's other goal, the other side of the abolition of poverty, was the abolition of war. That, too, was a goal for the Poor People's Campaign. King told his staff that what was important, "after we get [to Washington], and stay a few days," was to "call the peace movement in, and let them go on the other side of the Potomac and try to close down the Pentagon, if that can be done."

King was thinking in Gospel terms. He said, "I don't know what Jesus had as his demands other than 'repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' My demand in Washington is 'repent, America.'"[8]

The expression of that demand would be "a new stage of massive, active nonviolent resistance to the evils of the modern system." [9] He took as a model for the Washington campaign the crisis the Civil Rights Movement had created in Birmingham in 1965.

Without violence, we totally disrupted the system, the life style of Birmingham and then of Selma, with their unjust and unconstitutional laws. Our Birmingham struggle came to its dramatic climax when some 3,500 demonstrators virtually filled every jail in that city and surrounding communities, and some 4,000 more continued to march and demonstrate nonviolently. The city knew then in terms that were crystal-clear that Birmingham could no longer continue to function until the demands of the Negro community were met.[10]

When 1968 began, King was ready to take that model of creating a moral and political crisis, by nonviolently dislocating the functioning of a city, to a national level here in Washington —and finally to an international level in cities around the globe. He meant specifically and concretely a global nonviolent revolution to abolish war and poverty.

When I read *The Trumpet of Conscience*, I suspected Martin Luther King had not been killed by a lone assassin. King had the vision, the commitment, and the organization to pursue the reign of God in a global Beloved Community. That threatened both a national and an international power structure. The powers that be knew they had to kill Martin Luther King. But I would have no proof of that for 30 more years.

*The Trumpet of Conscience* repeated themes from King's [Riverside Church Address](#). It included a description of how he came to take a radical stand against the war in Vietnam. He talked about his failure to stop the rioting in the ghettos of the North:

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion, while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But, they asked, and rightly so, what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos

without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today:  
my own government.[11]

King was creating a crisis of conscience, in our national security state, that went deeper than dislocating the functioning of our capital, Washington, DC. King was dislocating the functioning of our ideology. The deepest spiritual and democratic values that the U.S. claimed it stood for King drew upon to confront our contradictions, from the jungles of Vietnam to our city ghettos. He insisted that we walk our talk. If not, our government should be nonviolently disrupted and shut down. He would do all he could to accomplish that end, regardless of the consequences to himself.

I learned those consequences in detail in November-December 1999, when I attended the only trial ever held for the assassination of Martin Luther King. It took place in Memphis, only a few blocks from the Lorraine Motel where he was killed. In a wrongful death lawsuit initiated by the King family, [70 witnesses testified over a six-week period](#). They described a sophisticated government plot that involved the FBI and CIA, the Memphis Police, Mafia intermediaries, and an Army Special Forces sniper team. The twelve jurors, six black and six white, returned after two and one-half hours of deliberation with [a verdict that King had been assassinated by a conspiracy that included agencies of his own government](#). For seven years now, the evidence and verdict of that trial have been public knowledge. The trial's entire transcript has been posted at [thekingcenter.com](http://thekingcenter.com).[\[12\]](#) It has been massively ignored. No one wants to deal with its implications. An understanding of the nature of King's assassination would threaten the roots of our systemic violence.

Martin Luther King was following the path of Jesus. King knew that unless he and we were willing to risk the cross, unless we chose the way of the nonviolent cross, there could be no transformation, no miracle of peace, no resurrection for us as a people. As a prophet of nonviolence, he chose the cross in his [speech at Riverside Church](#). He was raised on it one year later in Memphis. The process of King's cross and resurrection, a personal transformation, has helped make possible our cross and resurrection, which would be a social transformation.

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus tells us that his being raised on the cross *is* his resurrection—the resurrection of us all. “When I am lifted up from the earth,” Jesus says, “I will draw all people to myself.” ([John 12:32](#)) The cross of nonviolent, suffering love of enemies, grounded in God's forgiveness, marks the beginning of the end of violence—the drawing of all people together in Love. As our retreat's theme statement puts it, “the spiral of violence is broken by those willing to absorb the violence in their own flesh,” as Jesus did, and as his follower, Martin Luther King did.

Our great obstacle to breaking the spiral of violence is fear of the power of systemic evil. Jesus' nonviolent cross replaces fear with love and unity: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." Jesus' cross liberated the early Christians from fear of the empire's cross, whose purpose was to terrify and deter the empire's subjects from rebellion. To the Roman legions, Jesus and his followers of the Way were just another bunch of rebels who could be terrorized into submission by their fear of the cross. But for them the cross was transformed into a symbol of God's love. It became a way to absorb the enemy's violence in one's own flesh.

In the Gospel of John, which abounds in irony, the greatest irony of all is that it is the empire's raising up of Jesus, in its effort to kill and humiliate the Human One, that turns out to be his resurrection and exaltation. What was meant to terrify his followers becomes their symbol of faith and love. The revelation of Jesus' nonviolent cross turns his death into life, and our terror into love.

However, that didn't happen all at once. Most of his disciples fled in terror from his crucifixion. When they were in hiding behind locked doors, after Mary Magdalene had tried to tell them Jesus was really alive, he came to them, saying, "Peace be with you." Then he breathed the Spirit of Love and Forgiveness into them. At that point they were liberated from terror of the empire's cross. It was transformed into their symbol of faith.

In all the Gospels, Jesus identifies that process of crucifixion/resurrection not for himself alone but for every human being willing to walk the Way he does. He re-names himself the Human Being, a new kind of humanity. What the Human Being Jesus does, what Martin Luther King does as a follower of that glorified, martyred Humanity, we can do—bear witness to the transforming reign of God, so that when we end up in prison and lifted up on the empire's cross, our brothers and sisters can be freed from fear, too, and lifted up as well. This is Gospel. This is Good News—that we can live the truth without fear of the system, that we can get lifted up together, in what Martin described as the Beloved Community.

However, what is Good News for a community of faith is bad news for the system. Jesus also says in John's Gospel that the lifting up of the Human Being "is the judgment of this system; now the ruler of this system will be driven out." ([John 12:31](#))

Following the exegesis of Walter Wink, who has shown that in John the Greek word *kosmos* usually means "system," we can emphasize that meaning here: "Now [the lifting up of the Human Being] is the judgment of this system; now the ruler of this system will be driven out."

Who or what is the ruler of this system?

While there is a sense in which Satan rules the system, Wes Howard-Brooks has pointed out that “we should not be too quick to assume such a meaning here.”[13] Up to this point in John’s Gospel, the word *archon* “ruler,” has been used exclusively to refer to Nicodemus and the rulers of Judea. Nor did rabbinical literature use the phrase “ruler of the system” to refer to Satan.[14]

“The ruler of this system” meant in a mundane sense exactly what it said: the ruler of the system at the time of Jesus. In a local frame of reference, that meant the Sanhedrin, the central council that ruled Jerusalem. More significantly, “the ruler of this system” meant the ruler of the overriding system, the Roman Empire, which crucified Jesus on behalf of Caesar. In terms of that reference, what this Gospel proclaims is that when the system lifts up the Human Being on the cross, then Caesar will be driven out. The empire will lose its legitimacy and power. By raising up the Human One in martyrdom, the system will fall. That was true for the system in Jesus’ time. It is true of the system today.

The powers that rule our domination system are not stupid. They are aware that the public exaltation of humanity in suffering, nonviolent resistance would mean the system’s end. They know that reality of power much better than we do. They fear that their lifting up the martyr on the cross may turn out to be the state’s own judgment, the unmasking of its violence by love and truth. The system is petrified by fear of the nonviolent cross. It knew that when it had to crucify Martin Luther King, it had absolutely no credibility. So it took every possible precaution to disguise that execution. It had to crucify King anonymously. Otherwise the process Jesus revealed was going to happen, and keep on happening, right into our resurrection as a people—simultaneous with the death of our system of death. That process of crucifixion/resurrection of humanity, transforming us from fear to faith, is the judgment of this system. On that way of the cross, the rule of this domination system will be driven out. The system, as we have known it from one violent empire to another, will fall like a house of cards.

So we can see the dilemma for the system in its martyrdom of Martin Luther King. The system had to kill the prophet but conceal itself as the killer.

Because we have a national security state pretending to be a democracy, our intelligence agencies have been given the power to murder anonymously. They have the power to create scapegoats and cover up their assassinations.[15] They have the power to re-write the past, which is identical with the power to dictate the future. As George Orwell said in *1984*, “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.”[16]

So it came to pass, in our mass media, that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was said to have been killed not by the national security state he denounced forty years ago tonight but

instead by a poor, white, escaped convict. The system chose as its scapegoat a lifetime loser, a petty criminal who seemed to embody the classist pejorative “poor white trash,” James Earl Ray. On April 23, 1967, two and a half weeks after Dr. King’s Riverside Church Address, James Earl Ray, with the probable assistance of government officials, escaped—or was allowed to escape—from Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri. Ray would soon be taken under the wing of an intelligence agent, Raul, who would use Ray as a gunrunner, holding him in readiness until he was needed as the King assassination scapegoat. As an escaped convict, Ray was easily controlled and manipulated. The state had constructed a conspiracy of cowardice. The state had to hide behind James Earl Ray, a poor white man, to kill Martin Luther King, a prophetic black man. Otherwise our system would have been caught in the predicament described by Jesus in John—exposed, judged, and driven out of this country and the world as a system of death.

One can sympathize with the rulers of our system. They did only what they thought they had to do. They defended themselves covertly from a force they could not possibly overcome openly. The system was forced by its own kind of force to kill the prophet of nonviolent force anonymously. It very consistently covered up the evidence in Memphis. Then the system (and we along with it) went on to other wars and other business, just as King said it (and we) would do “beyond Vietnam.” We can recall [the prophecy he delivered to the crowd at Riverside Church forty years ago](#):

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing Clergy and Laity Concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam to Iraq and an endless war of terror, but not beyond our calling as children of the living God.

We need to know how Martin was killed.

He was, first of all, set up.

When Martin Luther King went to Memphis on March 28, 1968, to march with the striking sanitation workers, government provocateurs infiltrated the march. The provocateurs broke windows, disrupted the march, and provoked a police riot. The violence made it necessary for King to return to Memphis on April 3, to prepare for a truly nonviolent march that would prove SCLC could carry out a nonviolent Poor People’s Campaign in Washington. By being

forced to return to Memphis, King was being set up for his assassination.

He was also channeled into registering at the Lorraine Motel. On the day after the disrupted march, an FBI-authored article was passed to news media that read:

The fine Hotel Lorraine in Memphis is owned and patronized exclusively by Negroes but King didn't go there from his hasty exit [from the march]. Instead King decided the plush Holiday Inn Motel, white owned, operated and almost exclusively white patronized, was the place to 'cool it.' There will be no boycott of white merchants for King, only for his followers.[17]

Although the Lorraine Motel posed security problems, those making King's arrangements booked him there beginning April 3, just as the FBI wanted.

The Lorraine's owners, Walter and Lorraine Bailey, initially gave King a more secure inner courtroom behind the motel's office. However, Martin's SCLC staff had been infiltrated by the government.[18] On the night before King's arrival in Memphis, an unidentified male member of King's staff in Atlanta phoned the Baileys at the Lorraine. The man insisted that King's room be changed from the (more secure) inside location to an outside balcony room completely exposed to public view. The change was made.[19] The scene was set for April 4.

Martin's assassination was also preceded by a withdrawal of police security. His ordinary security in Memphis included a special unit of black officers commanded by Memphis Police Captain Jerry Williams. However, for King's April 3 arrival, Williams was disturbed that he was not asked to form the special black bodyguard.[20]

Moreover, two black firefighters at Fire Station 2, across the street from the Lorraine Motel, were inexplicably transferred early on April 4 to fire stations where they were not needed. [21] In addition, a black Memphis Police Department detective, Ed Redditt, who was watching King's room from a Fire Station 2 surveillance post, was suddenly removed from his post two hours before King's murder. The order was given by Memphis Police and Fire Director Frank Holloman, who had recently retired from 25 years with the FBI, seven of them as the supervisor of J. Edgar Hoover's office. Holloman ordered detective Redditt to go home because, Holloman claimed, Redditt's life had been threatened. Redditt protested, obeyed the order, and arrived home just as King was shot.[22]

Finally, also on April 4, by order of Frank Holloman's subordinate, Inspector Sam Evans, the four tactical police units patrolling the Lorraine Motel area were all pulled back, thereby allowing an assassin to escape more easily.[23]

Government agencies facilitated Martin's murder by the systematic withdrawal of all his



normal security. They also plotted his assassination in such a way as to involve the Mafia as intermediaries, providing another layer of cover for the powers that be. The scapegoat was James Earl Ray. If one probed behind him, one could discover a Mafia contract with police connections. Behind the Mafia, in the shadows, were the FBI and CIA. And behind them were the invisible minds and hands ruling the system, fearful of exposure to the light.

Everything was in place on April 4, 1968. The Mafia's Frank Liberto, a Memphis produce dealer, had sent a courier to deliver \$100,000 to Loyd Jowers, the owner of Jim's Grill whose back door opened onto the dense bushes across the street from the Lorraine Motel. Jowers then received a rifle in a box on April 3 from a man named Raul. It was Raul who also brought the scapegoat, James Earl Ray, into Memphis on April 4, after Raul had shepherded Ray in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico since the previous summer.

We know Loyd Jowers' role in the King assassination because he confessed to Martin's son, Dexter King, and former UN Ambassador Andrew Young [in a fall 1998 meeting that was tape-recorded](#). The audiotape was played for the jury at the 1999 trial I attended.[24] In his confession, Jowers said that meetings to plan the assassination took place at Jim's Grill. The planners included undercover Memphis Police Department Officer Marrell McCollough (who went on to a career with the CIA), Police Lieutenant Earl Clark, a third police officer, and two men who Jowers thought were federal agents.

At 6:00 p.m. on April 4, James Earl Ray was several blocks away at a service station, trying to get a flat spare tire fixed.[25] Unknown to Ray, the fake evidence to scapegoat him had already been left near the entrance to the boarding house where he had rented a room, as we learned from the King trial [testimony of Judge Arthur Hanes Jr.](#), Ray's former attorney. At ten minutes before the assassination, the rifle Ray had bought at Raul's orders was dropped in the doorway of the Canipe Amusement Company.[26] In the King trial, witness [Judge Joe Brown](#), who had the planted rifle tested, said that because its scope had not been sited, "this weapon literally could not have hit the broad side of a barn." [27]

At 6:00 p.m., the hired shooter was in the thick brush and bushes directly across from the Lorraine, aiming the real rifle at Martin Luther King, who was standing on the balcony in front of his room. Early the next morning, as established by trial testimony, those same bushes were cut down by order of Police Inspector Sam Evans, thus destroying the crime scene.[28]

Investigating the assassination of Martin Luther King over the past decade[29] has been pilgrimage into martyrdom. From that journey I have learned, first of all, how naïve I was about systemic evil. While there is nothing new about prophets being murdered by the system, I was not aware of how well our own system carries out such murders—and why.

I said such murders. Plural. I discovered Martin's assassination was intertwined with that of Malcolm X, who was also set up and murdered by our national security state. In his case, U.S. intelligence agencies manipulated National of Islam intermediaries for Malcolm's execution on February 21, 1965, at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan.[30]

Two and one half weeks before his assassination, Malcolm was in Selma, Alabama, hoping to meet with Martin. The paths of the two prophets were converging. After leaving the Nation of Islam the year before, Malcolm had embraced a universal vision of peace at Mecca. He had also spent four months in Africa meeting with the heads of its newly liberated states to organize a human rights campaign to put the United States on trial in the United Nations for its racist policies toward its own black citizens. By moving from civil rights to human rights, Malcolm was a step ahead of Martin, who was watching his work closely. However, they were unable to meet in Selma, because Martin had been arrested and jailed, and Malcolm had to leave for speaking in Europe before a jail visit with Martin could be arranged.

It is well documented that both Malcolm and Martin had been placed under exhaustive government surveillance. The FBI and CIA were monitoring their every move. The government knew it was only a matter of time before they would get together. That would not be allowed to happen. The long-simmering plot to kill Malcolm was heated up, resulting in his murder at the Audubon Ballroom after his return from Europe.

A key to the untold history of our domestic assassinations is the fact that our government was the first to develop and use nuclear weapons. The democratic principles this country professes were, from the beginning, in conflict with such weapons and our reluctance to submit them to international control. Nuclear weapons and civil liberties don't go together. Nuclear weapons and life don't go together. The rise of our national security state after World War Two, as justified by the Cold War that our nuclear weapons created, was the effective end of democracy in the USA. That history of a national security state replacing a democracy was climaxed by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, an event that foreshadows the martyrdom of Malcolm and Martin.

A nuclear weapons state that maintains the myth of being a democracy requires what our newspeak language calls "intelligence agencies," which specialize in covert action, assassinations, and propaganda whose targets include U.S. citizens. The CIA and its related covert action/propaganda agencies have evolved into what we today, with more newspeak (and a verbal surrender to our former World War Two enemies), call "Homeland Security." I

believe the reason why Malcolm's and Martin's assassinations by our own government can still shock many of us is that we are in denial of the fact that our government, by embracing nuclear weapons, became a national security state.

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, each in his own unique way, challenged that system to be true to its democratic origins, as did John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert. The four of them offered a combined witness to a process of justice, peace, and nuclear disarmament through which the people of this country could achieve a truly democratic government.[31] Until we turn in that direction, I believe what Martin said remains true in a more terrible sense than ever: The greatest purveyor of terrorism in the world today is my own government.

I want to conclude by sharing an exchange of letters with Walter Wink on the question why Jesus identified himself as the Human Being. Before Jesus chose the way of the cross, he chose to call himself the Human Being. Why?

If one wants to know more about Jesus as the Human Being, Walter Wink, your Holy Week 2004 Faith and Resistance Retreat speaker, is the person to ask. Walter's book, *The Human Being*, is the classic work on the subject.[32] I have been asking Walter questions about Jesus as the Human Being since the 1980's. He keeps taking me to new perspectives.

On July 3, 2000, after I read his draft manuscript of *The Human Being*, I wrote Walter Wink the following question:

I know some Greek but no Hebrew, so I ask you (who know both well): Do you think Jesus/*Yeshua* was named after Joshua?

Though nobody I know of says so (except a late friend Ben Edmonson in an unpublished manuscript), I have assumed that Joshua was Jesus' given namesake. Is that just plain wrong?

If it is possible or likely (in spite of the huge silence on the issue) that Jesus was named after Joshua, then the whole 'son of man' question takes on new meaning. His choice of **the human being** as his name is a choice of humanity over war. It is a refusal to be identified with a much-admired warrior who thought—with his followers, scribes, and violent imitators—that God commanded genocide as his will.

On July 14, 2000, Walter wrote back to me:

The linguistic issue is strong for your argument. In the only two places in the New Testament that refer to Joshua, *Iesous* is used. Apparently it was a very popular name, since Joshua was a great hero. However, I am puzzled that the Septuagint [a pre-Christian Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures]—woops, correction of what I almost said—yes, the Septuagint agrees—has *Iesous* [for Joshua]. So no question about it—Jesus is Joshua in

Hebrew. Your theory is, of course, more speculative, and can't be settled either way, though I naturally like it.

So with some linguistic support from Walter Wink, who likes the idea, here is a little meditation on Jesus' real name:

Humanity.

A word lying like a skull in the desert of our understanding.

Humanity.

It was Jesus' name for himself.

Humanity. To be literal, "the son of the man," in Greek *ho huios tou anthropou*. But, as John McKenzie points out, the excessively literal translation "the son of the man" for Jesus' Aramaic phrase was as meaningless in Greek as it is in English. The Aramaic idiom Jesus uses 82 times in the Gospels to identify himself, *bar nasha*, means humanity, personally and collectively.

Humanity.

Gaze at that 2,000-year-old skull of Jesus' real name, lying in the desert of our comprehension of the Gospels. Finger that human skull. Turn over slowly its implications. Hold it up as a question in our minds, sensing the sun of meaning behind it.

Humanity.

Why don't you call yourself by your own name, Jesus? Not once in all four Gospels. Instead you insist again and again that you're the human being, humanity.

Why not just say you're Jesus? Yeshua. Named after the one we know as Joshua. But no.

Humanity.

The skull of that word gazes back, blocking out the sun. Suddenly the sun breaks through.

No, I am not Jesus. I do not identify myself with Joshua, a warrior who committed genocide in the name of God.

I am humanity.

I am all of you.

Gaze through the skull into the sun.

For about twelve years now, I have known with constantly increasing detail how Martin Luther King was killed. I keep learning more all the time. However, I am also aware that what I know about this systemic murder is very little, compared to what there *is* to know.

I have met extraordinary people on this pilgrimage into darkness, witnesses to the truth who have great courage, like Dr. King's. The witnesses who have seen the unspeakable truth of his martyrdom, and who have dared to speak its truth, are themselves martyrs—witnesses who have been threatened, persecuted, committed by the government to mental institutions, and killed.

The truth of the assassination of Martin Luther King is one issue on which the system will never retreat, any more than it would retreat from its lies on the interrelated assassinations of Malcolm X and the Kennedys.

Just as Jesus says in John, that truth of the cross would destroy it. That truth of the cross, absorbed by us in widening circles of nonviolent commitment, would drive our evil system out of this country and the world. The transforming truth of King's martyrdom is the truth of our cross and resurrection as a people. It is not beyond our reach, but the system would be driven out if we did reach it.

My hardest task in learning the beginning truth about King's cross has to do with what Jesus, and Martin as his disciple, have taught us to do to be truly human—love the enemy. I have had to realize how profoundly naïve I have been about evil, even when living with Shelley and our son Tom for years in a house at the end of the line where our extended Agape Community would regularly block trains carrying enough nuclear weapons to destroy whole continents, perhaps all life on earth. But as terrible as that concrete realization of evil was and is, it was less overwhelming for me than what I feel now from Dr. King's murder. The systemic way in which this prophet of compassion and transformation for our world was stalked, set up, and executed by our government takes my breath away. The cover-up to this day is no less elaborate.

So I have a hard time loving the enemies who are most responsible for this crime against us all, this attempt to assassinate hope that has succeeded to the extent we as a people have allowed it to do so. Our scene has become more desperate in many ways since April 4, 1968,

or on that previous April 4 at Riverside Church. The terrible widening of evil that King envisioned beyond Vietnam forty years ago tonight, we have seen happen.

So it is hard to love the unseen enemies who work so feverishly and systematically to murder voices of hope, as they continue to do, covering their tracks all the way.

In the summer of 1961, a white student from Union Theological Seminary named Gurdon Brewster worked with Dr. King and his father, Martin Luther King, Sr., at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Brewster was forced to confront a racist system made flesh for him in a group of white men who, in a parking lot one night, almost took his life for working with the Kings. The morning after that encounter, Brewster marched into Dr. King's office and demanded of the prophet of nonviolence, "How do you love those people, anyway? How do you love the enemy, when all those people do such violent things to you? How do you still love them?"

Martin Luther King looked at him, sat still, and thought. King's phone was ringing, and his secretary was rapping on his door, calling out that the Justice Department wanted to talk to him. Brewster waited for an answer to his question.

Finally King said softly, "You've got to reach deeper until you are transformed by your suffering. With your suffering and your love, you must cut the chains of hate. You've got to reach down deeper until your suffering and your love draw you closer to God."[\[33\]](#)

At the trial held in Memphis for King's assassination, one of his assassins was present in the courtroom as a defendant—Loyd Jowers. Mr. Jowers was old and feeble at that point. He was hardly a major player in the conspiracy. Those men of great power would never be defendants in any earthly courtroom. Yet the King family knew well from Loyd Jowers' confession that he had passed the rifle to the man who fired it from the bushes. Or perhaps more likely, though he denied it, Loyd Jowers had himself been the man who actually pulled the trigger of the gun that killed Dr. King.

I watched from a few feet away from Jowers when Coretta Scott King entered the courtroom [to be a witness in the trial](#). She walked up to Loyd Jowers, who in a state of confusion rose from his chair. She looked into his eyes and shook his hand.

Yes, we can cut the chains of hate.

But we must reach down deeper until our suffering and our love draw us closer to God.

## Notes

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Hyperlinks to most book titles go to [WorldCat.org](http://WorldCat.org), “the world’s largest network of library content and services. WorldCat libraries are dedicated to providing access to their resources on the Web, where most people start their search for information.” These links were accessed from the greater Boston area. Enter your zip or postal code (e.g. 43017 or S7K-5X2), City and/or state (e.g. Cincinnati, Ohio or Ohio or OH), Province: (e.g. Ontario or ON), Country: (e.g. United States or United Kingdom), or Latitude Longitude (e.g. 40.266000,-83.219250) to see listings of libraries where you live. Where possible book title links reference the precise edition cited in these footnotes. Where such editions could not be found, alternate versions are linked to. Alternatively to [worldcat.org](http://worldcat.org), some titles link to [OpenLibrary.org](http://OpenLibrary.org), an open, editable library catalog, building towards a web page for every book ever published. Open Library is a project of the non-profit [Internet Archive](http://Internet Archive), and has been funded in part by a grant from the California State Library and the Kahle/Austin Foundation.

1. ↪ See [Pacific Life Community – Ending Nuclear Weapons and War-Making Through Nonviolent Direct Action](#).

See 2012 PLC Retreat: [Vandenberg... Occupied! Jeju Island... Occupied!](#) The people of Jeju Island in South Korea have been struggling for 7 years to resist US efforts to build a base on the island. Five days a week, all day, people on the island organize and pray and protest to save their fragile ecosystem and culture as the US pressures South Korea to let them build a massive port for Aegis Destroyers.

See also:

- o “[The Battle for Jeju Island: How the Arms Race is Threatening a Korean Paradise](#),” by Robert Redford, *OnEarth Magazine*, 3 February 2012
- o From [Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space](#):
  - [Jeju Island, Hawaii and Civilian-Military Dual Use Port](#), by Kyle Kajihiro, DMZ Hawai’i / Aloha ‘Aina
  - [Reports on the GN’s 2012 Space Conference – Hawaii and Jeju Island](#), February 20-28, 2012

### PLC Statement of Nonviolence

The Pacific Life Community agrees to adhere to these guidelines for nonviolent behavior during active witness, direct actions, and citizen interventions.

- o Refuse to engage in verbal abuse or physical violence;
- o Pledge not to bring or use any drugs or alcohol other than for medical purposes;
- o Carry no weapons;
- o Refuse to retaliate if injured;
- o Maintain a spirit of openness, friendliness and respect toward police officers, court officials, and all others I encounter;
- o Share my message of peace with clarity;
- o Listen with my self fully present and alert;
- o Remain gentle, never self-righteous or hostile;
- o Keep in mind that transformation and conversion to peace must begin with my own life;
- o Sustain this discipline throughout all consequences, even under arrest.

### Pacific Life Community Links to sister organizations:

- o [30 years of Nukewatch](#)
- o [Atomic Mirror](#)
- o [Catholic Worker Movement](#)
- o [Disarm Now Plowshares](#)
- o [Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action](#)
- o [Kansas City Nuclear Plant](#)
- o [Kelly Avenue Catholic Worker](#)
- o [Los Angeles Catholic Worker](#)
- o [Nevada Desert Experience](#)
- o [Puget Sound Nuclear Weapon Free Zone](#)
- o [Tacoma Catholic Worker](#)
- o [The Nuclear Resister](#)
- o [Vandenberg Protests Blog](#)
- o [Vandenberg Witness](#)

2. ↪ See [Jonah House](#), a part of The Atlantic Life Community. Jonah House is a faith-based community living within the interdependent pillars of nonviolence, resistance and community. It began as a community in 1973

with a group of people that included Philip Berrigan, a Catholic priest, and Elizabeth McAlister, formerly a Catholic nun. Read more from the [Jonah House Brochure](#). Regarding the three pillars:

#### NONVIOLENCE

People at Jonah House are committed to making nonviolence a way of life. We agree that "Thou shalt not kill" has no exceptions: we believe that we are commanded by our faith not to kill and, beyond that, to resist killing in our name. More—we know that nonviolence involves the utmost respect for each other, for all people (individually and collectively), and for all creation.

#### RESISTANCE

Resistance implies actions in opposition to unjust practices, policies, institutions and systems. As a community, we commit to speaking out about the connection between warmaking and homelessness, hunger, despair and poverty. The particular focus of Jonah House has been acting, engaging in nonviolent civil resistance against war and for the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.

#### COMMUNITY

We learned slowly and are still leaning that community is vital to our nonviolence and resistance. The essence of community for us is breathing together on behalf of life (which is the meaning of conspiracy). Key to the Jonah House Community is a common purse and consistent resistance to the hierarchy and exchange values of the dominant culture. Decisions are made together. Work is shared in all its aspects. Study, prayer, writing, teaching and manual labor are all important components of our life.

3. ↪ See transcript of Dr. King's complete speech, given a year to the day before he was assassinated: "[Beyond Vietnam](#)," Address delivered to the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, 4 April 1967, Riverside Church, New York City.
4. ↪ David J. Garrow, [Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) (New York: Perennial Classics, 2004), p. 555.
5. ↪ Martin Luther King, [The Trumpet of Conscience](#) (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).
6. ↪ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
7. ↪ On December 4, 1967, Martin Luther King [announced the Poor People's Campaign to the press in Atlanta Georgia](#).
8. ↪ Garrow, [Bearing the Cross](#), p. 593.
9. ↪ [The Trumpet of Conscience](#), p. 48.  
Regarding massive, active nonviolent resistance, see also, Dr. Rosalie Bertell, from "[Quietly Eating Radioactivity](#)", Vancouver, 1986:

... At some point or other if we survive, there's going to have to be a massive non-cooperation with our society which is producing death....

It's this preoccupation with producing death, and instruments of death and mega-death. This is our root sickness. We're not choosing to *live* on this planet, we're choosing to kill it. If we're going to turn that around it's going to require massive non-cooperation; it's going to have to be non-violent because you can't violently choose life, you kill it. So it's going to *have* to be non-violent. And it's going to have to be basically people-to-people networks built on trust because you're *trusting* the future and you're trusting your life.

To me, there are four stages that populations will move through in trying to deal with these issues. I would suggest if you have not read the book by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, [On Death And Dying](#), that you read it, and if you have read it I suggest you read it again, but read it not in terms of personal death, read it in terms of the death of the species.

I think you'll find that a society goes through the same kind of stages as an individual goes through when they deal with these life-and-death questions. And this applies to revolution, it applies to the nuclear issue, it applies to Star Wars, it applies to many things in society that carry with them the potential of destroying us as a species and destroying our future....



I think it's both a death process and a birth process, and the death is coming hard. And it's the death of militarism. It's the death of the rule of the club. It's the death of might makes right. And we are capable of running the world on a different basis than that. It has happened before in history that we have turned aside from behaviors and it can happen again. And it *will* happen again.

10. ↪ Ibid., p. 54.

11. ↪ Ibid., p. 24.

12. ↪ A single PDF file of [the entire trial transcript](#) and the subsequent 9 December 1999 King Family Press Conference is at the King Center website at <<http://www.thekingcenter.org/assassination-conspiracy-trial>> The transcript is also available as a hypertext representation – e.g. with functionality to link to any specific page in the 2,288 page record as well as links to the beginning of each of the 70 witness's Testimony, Direct Examination, Cross Examination, etc. – at <https://ratical.org/ratville/JFK/MLKACT/>.

13. ↪ Wes Howard-Brooks, *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 283.

14. ↪ Ibid.

15. ↪ The power to murder anonymously and cover up executions serving the interests represented by national security state managers was initiated with the doctrine of “plausible denial.” From the author's [2009 Keynote Address](#) to the Coalition on Political Assassinations Conference:

The doctrine of plausible deniability in an old government document provides us with a source of the assassination of President Kennedy. The document was issued in 1948, one year after the CIA was established, 15 years before JFK's murder. That document, National Security Council Directive 10/2, “gave the highest sanction of the [U.S.] government to a broad range of covert operations” – propaganda, sabotage, economic warfare, subversion of all kinds, [and eventually assassinations] – that were seen as necessary to ‘win’ the Cold War against the Communists. The government's condition for those covert activities by U.S. agencies, coordinated by the CIA, was that they be, as the document says, “so planned and executed that ... if uncovered the US government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them.”

The two quotes above are from Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), p. 293. The text in square braces is included as it appears in the Afterword of the [2010 Simon & Schuster paperback edition of JFK and the Unspeakable](#), p. 381 (accessible in the [Browse Inside](#) viewer).

National Security Council Intelligence Directive (NSCID) 10/2 (June 18, 1948) and its descendant, NSC 5412, also known as the Special Group 5412/2, a subcommittee of the National Security Council, was in time employed by Allen Dulles to develop a capability for clandestine operations world-wide. See: Col. L. Fletcher Prouty (USAF, ret.) “[The Forty Committee](#),” *Genesis*, February, 1975, pp.28, 105-108; and “[Appendix C](#), NSC 5412, ‘National Security Council Directive on Covert Operations’,” Ratcliffe, *Understanding Special Operations*, pp. 330-32.

See also: [Document 292. National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects – NSC 10/2 from Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950, Retrospective Volume, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment](#), (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

Regarding some of the consequences of the doctrine of “plausible denial” as investigated and summarized by the Church Committee, see:

REPORT No. 94-465,

[ALLEGED ASSASSINATION PLOTS INVOLVING FOREIGN LEADERS](#)

AN INTERIM REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE TO STUDY GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TOGETHER WITH ADDITIONAL, SUPPLEMENTAL, AND SEPARATE VIEWS

NOVEMBER 20 (legislative day, NOVEMBER 18), 1975

#### [IV. Findings and Conclusions \(PDF of original: 2016KB\)](#)

- [5. Practices Current at the Time in Which the Assassination Plots Occurred Were Revealed by the Record To Create the Risk of Confusion, Rashness and Irresponsibility in the Very Areas Where](#)

## Clarity and Sober Judgment Were Most Necessary

Various witnesses described elements of the system within which the assassination plots were conceived. The Committee is disturbed by the custom that permitted the most sensitive matters to be presented to the highest levels of Government with the least clarity. We view the following points as particularly dangerous:

- (1) The expansion of the doctrine of “plausible denial” beyond its intended purpose of hiding the involvement of the United States from other countries into an effort to shield higher officials from knowledge, and hence responsibility, for certain operations.
- (2) The use of circumlocution or euphemism to describe serious matters—such as assassination—when precise meanings ought to be made clear.
- (3) The theory that general approval of broad covert action programs is sufficient to justify specific actions such as assassination or the passage of weapons.
- (4) The theory that authority granted, or assumed to be granted, by one DCI or one Administration could be presumed to continue without the necessity for reaffirming the authority with successor officials.
- (5) The creation of covert capabilities without careful review and authorization by policymakers, and the further risk that such capabilities, once created, might be used without specific authorization.

### *(a) The danger inherent in overextending the doctrine “plausible denial”*

The original concept of “plausible denial” envisioned implementing covert actions in a manner calculated to conceal American involvement if the actions were exposed. The doctrine was at times a delusion and at times a snare. It was naive for policymakers to assume that sponsorship of actions as big as the Bay of Pigs invasion could be concealed. The Committee’s investigation of assassination and the public disclosures which preceded the inquiry demonstrate that when the United States resorted to cloak-and-dagger tactics, its hand was ultimately exposed. We were particularly disturbed to find little evidence that the risks and consequences of disclosure were considered.

We find that the likelihood of reckless action is substantially increased when policymakers believe that their decisions will never be revealed. Whatever can be said in defense of the original purpose of plausible denial—a purpose which intends to conceal United States involvement from the outside world—the extension of the doctrine to the internal decision-making process of the Government is absurd. Any theory which, as a matter of doctrine, places elected officials on the periphery of the decision-making process is an invitation to error, an abdication of responsibility, and a perversion of democratic government. The doctrine is the antithesis of accountability.

### *(b) The danger of using “Circumlocution and Euphemism”*

According to Richard Bissell, the extension of “plausible denial” to internal decision-making required the use of circumlocution and euphemism in speaking with Presidents and other senior officials.

Explaining this concept only heightens its absurdity. On the one hand, it assumes that senior officials should be shielded from the truth to enable them to deny knowledge if the truth comes out. On the other hand, the concept assumes that senior officials must be told enough, by way of double talk, to grasp the subject. As a consequence, the theory fails to accomplish its objective and only increases the risk of misunderstanding. Subordinate officials should describe their proposals in clear, precise, and brutally frank language; superiors are entitled to, and should demand, no less.

Euphemism may actually have been preferred—not because of “plausible denial”—but because the persons involved could not bring themselves to state in plain language what they intended to do; In some instances, moreover, subordinates may have assumed, rightly or wrongly, that the listening superiors did not want the issue squarely placed before them. “Assassinate,” “murder” and “kill” are words many people do not want to speak or hear. They describe acts which should not even be proposed, let alone plotted. Failing to call dirty business by its rightful name may have increased the risk of dirty business being done.

### *(c) The danger of generalized instructions*

Permitting specific acts to be taken on the basis of general approvals of broad strategies (e.g., keep

Allende from assuming office, get rid of the Castro regime) blurs responsibility and accountability. Worse still, it increases the danger that subordinates may take steps which would have been disapproved if the policymakers had been informed. A further danger is that policymakers might intentionally use loose general instructions to evade responsibility for embarrassing activities.

In either event, we find that the gap between the general policy objectives and the specific actions undertaken to achieve them was far too wide. It is important that policymakers review the manner in which their directives are implemented, particularly when the activities are sensitive, secret, and immune from public scrutiny.

*(d) The danger of "Floating Authorization"*

One justification advanced by Richard Helms and William Harvey for not informing John McCone about the use of underworld figures to attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro was their assertion that the project had already been approved by McCone's predecessor, Allen Dulles, and that further authorization was unnecessary, at least until the operation had reached a more advanced stage.

We find that the idea that authority might continue or "float" from one administration or director to the next, and that there is no duty to reaffirm authority inhibits responsible decision-making. Circumstances may change or Judgments differ. New officials should be given the opportunity to review significant programs.

*(e) The problems connected with creating new covert capabilities*

The development of a new capability raises numerous problems. Having a capability to engage in certain covert activity increases the probability that the activity will occur, since the capability represents a tool available for use. There is the further danger that authorization for the mere creation of a capability may be misunderstood as permitting its use without requiring further authorization.

Finally, an assassination capability should never have been created.

16. ↪ George Orwell, 1984 – find it through [Open Library](#) or read it online:
  - Russia: [1984 in five languages](#); [Library of/about Orwell's works](#)
  - Canada: [Charles' George Orwell Links](#) (with publication data)
  - Australia: [The University of Adelaide](#)
17. ↪ [FBI Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, March 29, 1968](#). Subject: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM; BLACK NATIONALIST – HATE GROUPS; RACIAL INTELLIGENCE (MARTIN LUTHER KING). Identified as MLK Exhibit F-451C in [Investigation of the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Hearings Before the Select Committee on Assassinations of the U.S. House of Representatives, Vol. VI, p. 308](#) (caps in original). (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979).
18. ↪ Martin Luther King's SCLC staff had been infiltrated by the government as described in David J. Garrow, [The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 173-203.
19. ↪ Testimony in [the King trial](#) by [Leon Cohen](#), retired New York City police officer, [on information given to him by Walter Bailey](#).
20. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Retired Police Captain Jerry Williams](#).
21. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Floyd Newsom](#) and [Norville Wallace](#) on their removal from Fire Station Number 2, on South Main Street, between South Main and Mulberry Street.
22. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Detective Edward Redditt](#) on his removal from Fire Station Number 2 late in the afternoon of 4 April 1968.
23. ↪ The [King trial](#) testimony by [Phillip Melanson](#) describes "the four deployed tactical units with approximately ten or twelve cars [which] were in various locations within a five-block radius of the Lorraine," and how "On the morning of the assassination, [the order came for the tactical units to be withdrawn outside of a five-block area](#), therefore, disbursing them at a much greater distance and removing their presence from the immediate what would become the assassination scene.... [The order was given by Inspector Sam Evans](#)."
24. ↪ See [transcript of the audiotape meeting](#) between Loyd Jowers, Dexter Scott King, Andrew J. Young and Jowers' attorney Lewis Garrison, in Little Rock, Arkansas in November 1998, that was replayed in court on

the fifth day of the Memphis trial, 22 November 1999.

25. ↪ Deposition of James Earl Ray, taken March 11 and 12, 1995 in the case of *James Earl Ray versus Loyd Jowers* and read into the record in the [King trial](#) where [Ray describes being several blocks away from the Lorraine Hotel at a service station, trying to get a flat spare tire fixed](#). In the same trial, witness statements to the FBI by [Ray Alvis Hendrix](#) and [William Zinny Reed](#) which supported Ray's testimony were read into the record.
26. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Arthur Haynes, Jr.](#) on the rifle Ray bought on Raul's orders [being dropped in the doorway of the Canipe Amusement Company before the assassination](#).
27. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Judge Joe Brown](#) on how the weapon that was supposed to have killed Martin Luther King with one shot ["could not have hit the broad side of a barn."](#)
28. ↪ [King trial](#) testimony by [Maynard Styles](#) on how he "received a call from Inspector Evans on or about seven a.m. [April 5, 1968] requesting assistance in ["clearing brush and debris from a vacant lot in the vicinity of the assassination."](#)
29. ↪ I have deleted the two previous paragraphs from the 2007 text of this talk. They described an Army Special Forces sniper team deployed as a contingency force in King's murder. With the eye of a trained diplomat, Peter Dale Scott has critiqued incisively the documentation presented for the sniper plan: "I believe ... the sniper team story was disinformation from high sources designed to discredit Pepper. In particular, an alleged authorizing cable, citing Operation Garden Plot, is to a trained reader a self-revealing forgery ..." Peter Dale Scott, *The Road To 9/11, Wealth, Empire, and the Future of America* (UC Press, 2007), p. 285, endnote 15, with reference to William F. Pepper, *Orders to Kill: The Truth Behind the Murder of Martin Luther King* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1995), [photo #33](#) and text page 424. Scott wrote further, citing the pictured cable: "The time group 301442Z April 1968 begins with 30, which would normally be the date. But April 30 [rather than April 4, 1968] is clearly wrong." Peter Dale Scott's e-mail to Dave Ratcliffe, 5/16/12. Even according to CIA operative Jack Terrell's testimony, the sniper team was put on standby in West Memphis, Arkansas, and never reached Memphis: ["They were headed in to take up their positions when the mission was cancelled."](#) *The 13th Juror*, p. 403. It was a contingency plan that was not activated. King was killed by a shot from the bushes.
30. ↪ See ["The Converging Martyrdom of Malcolm and Martin,"](#) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture, Princeton Theological Seminary, by James W. Douglass, March 29, 2006.
31. ↪ On 6 May 2008 Jim Douglass [spoke at Elliot Bay Books](#), Seattle, after publication of *JFK and the Unspeakable* about how – of MLK, Malcolm X, JFK, and RFK – the story of John Kennedy was the most surprising to him:

The next book will hopefully be on Malcolm and Martin and the final one on Robert Kennedy. It's the same story four times over. John Kennedy is in some ways the most amazing story to me. Because Malcolm and Martin were prophets. And Robert Kennedy was of course changed profoundly by the death of his brother and moved in a new direction. But John Kennedy was actually President of the United States. And to discover – what I didn't know at all when he was alive – that he was turning, turning really in a Biblical sense, so profoundly in the direction of peace-making that his national security state found it necessary, from the standpoint of the powers-that-be, to assassinate him – that was to me – and is – astounding. That's to me the major lesson of what I learned. It's not the depth of evil that killed him, which is very great. It is that he had the courage, in a position that became more and more and more isolated during his presidency, he had the courage to stand against the most powerful state in history and particularly at its most critical moment. That's what I found hard to believe.

Concerning President Kennedy's turning towards peace, in 1962 John Kennedy gave himself three Bay of Pigs -type events – specific conflicts with his national security managers from the military and intelligence establishments – [before a military coup would overthrow him and seize control of the United States](#). A list of such conflicts between himself and his national security state includes:

1. 1961: [negotiated peace with the Communists for a neutralist government in Laos](#);
2. April 1961: [Bay of Pigs](#) and JFK's response: "[I want] to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."
3. 1961-63: Kennedy-Hammarskjöld-UN vision [kept the Congo together and independent](#);
4. April 1962: [conflict with big steel industrialists](#);
5. October 1962: [Cuban Missile Crisis](#);
6. 1961-63: [Diplomatic opening to Third World leadership of President Sukarno](#);

7. May 6, 1963: [Presidential order NSAM 239 to pursue both a nuclear test ban and a policy of general and complete disarmament](#);
  8. **June 10, 1963: [American University Address](#)**;
  9. Summer 1963: [Nuclear Test Ban Treaty](#);
  10. Fall 1963: beginning of [back-channel dialogue with Fidel Castro](#);
  11. Fall 1963: JFK's [decision to sell wheat to the Russians](#);
  12. October 11, 1963: [Presidential order NSAM #263 to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam by 1965](#);
  13. November 1963: [Khrushchev decides to accept JFK's invitation for a joint expedition to the moon](#).
32. ↪ Walter Wink *[The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man](#)* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002). From the dust jacket:
- The epithet 'the son of the man' (or 'the Human Being') in the Gospels has been a highly debated topic. Wink uses this phrase to explore not only early Christology but the anthropology articulated in the Gospels. Jesus apparently avoided designations such as Messiah, Son of God, or God, though these titles were given by his disciples after his death and resurrection. But Jesus is repeatedly depicted as using the obscure expression 'the Human Being' as virtually his only form of self-reference. Wink explores how Jesus' self-referential phrase came to be universalized as the 'Human Being' or 'Truly Human One.' The Human Being is a catalytic agent for transformation, providing the form and lure and hunger to become who we were meant to be, or more properly perhaps, to become who we truly are. The implications of this are profound, Wink argues. We are freed to go on the journey that Jesus charted rather than to worship the journey of Jesus. We can rescue Jesus from the baggage of christological beliefs added by the church. We are enabled to strip away the heavy accretion of dogma that installed Jesus as the second person of the trinity. Now he can be available to anyone seeking to realize the Human Being within. Jesus becomes uniquely a criterion of humanness. He shows us something of what it means to become human, but not enough to keep us from having to discover our true humanity ourselves.
33. ↪ Gurdon Brewster, *[No Turning Back: My Summer with Daddy King](#)*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007) p. 209.

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<https://ratical.org/ratville/JFK/Unspeakable/KingAndCross.html>