

Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 Anti-War Speech And Today

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Martin Luther King speaking at Riverside Church, NYC, 4 Apr 1967

Almost fifty years ago Martin Luther King gave a major speech against the Vietnam war and US militarism in general. In that speech he tied together our militaristic and repressive response to the movements of national liberation throughout the world that were threatening certain economic interests. He called for a revolution in our values from an orientation toward wealth and physical things toward a concern with others and particularly the poor. He warned that history did not stand still, that if we did not seize the opportunity, the tides that seemed to be rising against injustice might recede.

Looking back we can see that his warning was all too true. The lessons of the movement against of the Vietnam War were not learned by us. We allowed ourselves to be mesmerized by the manufactured drama of Watergate. We allowed our revulsion over the Vietnam War to be labeled our “Vietnam Syndrome”, something to be cured by another more successful First War against Iraq.

Now fifty years later we are in darker times. The military industrial intelligence complex, the national security state, the corporations and their media are all more entrenched. We find ourselves living inside a monster to which we have a parasitic relationship, a monster which progressively threatens the environment upon which life on our planet depends.

January 18 was Martin Luther King Day. Is this really a day of celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.? Or is it a day designed to further consign him to history and truncate his message? In an effort to explore this, let's go back to his [speech at Riverside Church](#) of 49 years ago on April 4, 1967, a year to the day before he was assassinated, and, re-working it, take from it what we can for today. Perhaps this can help us come closer to truly resurrecting Martin Luther King, Jr in ourselves. In the following 2016 re-work, Dr. King's original words are set in italics and bold.

A time comes when silence is betrayal....

Gandhi taught us that "Truth is God". If this is so, to turn away from truth is to turn away from God. But there is more that needs to be understood about truth.

On April 25, 1998 Guatemalan Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi Conedera was assassinated one day after he stood before an audience in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guatemala City and gave a speech in which he presented the findings of an in-depth probe into thousands and thousands of murdered and disappeared persons, casualties of a campaign of terror against the people of Guatemala waged by their own government, a war against the people supported by the US government.

Here is some of what Bishop Conedera said in his April 24th speech.

The root of humanity's downfall and disgrace comes from the deliberate opposition to truth ... this reality that has been intentionally deformed in our country throughout thirty-six years of war against the people.

To open ourselves to the truth and to bring ourselves face to face with our personal and collective reality is not an option that can be accepted or rejected. It is an undeniable requirement of all people and all societies that seek to humanize themselves and to be free....

Truth is the primary word, the serious and mature action that makes it possible for us to break the cycle of death and violence and open ourselves to a future of hope and light for all ...

Discovering the truth is painful, but it is without a doubt a healthy and liberating action.

And the failure to speak the truth is to turn away from God.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.

These are dark times indeed, but they are not without shafts of light. In response to our threatened environment a courageous Canadian woman, Naomi Klein, has written [*This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*](#). In the face of our national security state Edward Snowden has broken the code of silence and David Talbot has written [*The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA and the Rise of America's Secret Government*](#). In the contest to determine the next President there is even a candidate who is speaking openly about important and rarely heard truths about our system. He is openly espousing "socialism" and he has dared to mention the truth regarding our long history of engaging in what is politely referred to as "regime change" as in [Guatemala and Iran](#) for instance. Truth is a shaft of light in the darkness of the monster.

My hope is that in the process of truth telling *a significant number of us will move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement, and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.*

If silence is betrayal, has the time come for us to speak the truth about our so-called "War on Terror"?

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to members of ISIS, or members of Al Quada, or those who

would do violence to America. *Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragic wars in the Middle East and in Asia. Neither is it an attempt to suggest that the positions of the members of ISIS, or members of Al Quada, or those who would do violence to America are those of virtue, nor to overlook the role they must play in the successful resolution of the problem. While they believe they have justifiable reasons to hate and want to bring harm to the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides. Tonight, however, I wish...to speak...to my fellow Americans.*

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing the “War on Terror” into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the “War on Terror” and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Many felt that with the end of the Cold War, it might be possible for there to be a new era of peace. Then came the “War on Terror”, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war. And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like the “War on Terror” continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps a more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and daughters and their brothers and sisters and their husbands and wives to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them...thousand[s] of miles away to supposedly guarantee a democracy which seemed increasingly remote here in the United States. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of America ... As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and 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 the ‘War on Terror?’” 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. For the sake of those boys and girls, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, “Aren’t you a civil rights leader?” and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: “To save the soul of America.” We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

*O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath –
America will be!*

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read the “War on Terror”. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that “America will be” are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1954^[1]. And I cannot forget that the [Nobel Peace Prize was also a commission](#), a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances.

But even if it were not present, I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me, the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against this war. Could it be that they do not know that the Good News was

meant for all men and women,...for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the people of Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to explain for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place, I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, daughtership and sisterhood. Because I believe that God is deeply concerned especially for...suffering and helpless and outcast children. I come tonight to speak for them. This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation and for those it calls "enemy," for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers and sisters.

And as I ponder the madness of the "War on Terror" and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of the Middle East. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of our allies or our enemies, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of this war for more than a decade. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries....

The essence and *the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the other's point of view, and to...learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the other.*

We must muster a willingness to see how things appear from the other side. And so I must undertake a very painful task of looking more deeply into the history of this "War on Terror" and of calling my fellow citizens to examine the evidence of how it was launched and how it must appear to people whose vision is not clouded by a loyalty to the government of the United States. I am speaking about the events of September 11, 2001. The act which was used as the basis for launching this so-called "War on Terror".

But I also want to quote to you a poem by Bertolt Brecht: In Praise of Learning. It is a poem of the utmost importance for us in this time of darkness in this nation.

Learn the simplest things
for you whose time has come, it is never too late.
You must take the lead.
Learn your ABC's.
It is not enough, but learn them.
Don't be discouraged, begin!
You must know everything.
You must take the lead.
Study you in exile.
Study you in prison
Study you in the kitchen
Study you who are old.
You must take the lead.
Seek out a school, you who are homeless.
Sharpen your wits, you who shiver.
Hungry one, reach for a book.
It is a weapon.
You must take the lead.
Don't be afraid asking.
Don't be won over,
What you don't know yourself,
You don't know.
Add up the reckoning.
It's you who must pay it.
Put your finger on each item.
Ask, "How did that get here."
You must take the lead.

We, the people of the United States have a responsibility to God, to put our fingers on the "War on Terror" and to fearlessly ask, "How did it get here?" Anyone who is willing to do this must confront a most disturbing reality. What we have been told by our government and the corporate mass media about the events of September 11, 2001 cannot be true. This fact has been established by numerous individuals who have had the courage to examine the evidence, to speak what they have found, and not be mesmerized by those in power who attempt to convince us that the truth is uncertain.

I cannot in this limited time discuss the details, but I can direct you to a variety of resources which any person who wishes to be faithful to God must take up. Amongst these resources are the British film [Incontrovertible](#), Graeme MacQueen's [The 2001 Anthrax Deception: The Case for a Domestic Conspiracy](#), and the lucid analyses of theologian and author David Ray Griffin. Of Griffin's [11 books](#) on the evidence of the event. I

recommend any of the following three: *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the Cover-up and the Expose*, *The Mysterious Collapse of World Trade Center 7: Why the Final Official Report about 9/11 is Unscientific*, and *Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11: A Call to Reflection and Action*[A][B]. These sources, to name but a few, make clear there is nothing mysterious about 9/11.

In doing our homework, it will be necessary to return to the period before September 11, 2001, to a time before the George W. Bush Administration, to the Project for a New American Century.

The [Project for the New American Century](#) (PNAC) [[HTML](#), [PDF](#)] was a neoconservative think tank based in Washington, D.C. that focused on United States foreign policy. It was established as a non-profit educational organization in 1997, and founded by [William Kristol](#) and [Robert Kagan](#). The PNAC's stated goal was "to promote American global leadership". The organization stated that "American leadership is good both for America and for the world," and sought to build support for "a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity".

The following excerpt is quoted verbatim (with British spellings of certain words).

["A New Pearl Harbor"](#) by John Pilger. *New Statesman*, 16 Dec 2002

Two years ago a project set up by the men who now surround George W Bush said what America needed was "a new Pearl Harbor." Its published aims have, alarmingly, come true.

The threat posed by US terrorism to the security of nations and individuals was outlined in prophetic detail in a document written more than two years ago and disclosed only recently. What was needed for America to dominate much of humanity and the world's resources, it said, was "some catastrophic and catalysing event – like a new Pearl Harbor".

The attacks of 11 September 2001 provided the "new Pearl Harbor", described as "the opportunity of ages". The extremists who have since exploited 11 September come from the era of Ronald Reagan, when far-right groups and "think-tanks" were established to avenge the American "defeat" in Vietnam. In the 1990s, there was an added agenda: to justify the denial of a "peace dividend" following the cold war. The Project for the New American Century was formed, along with the American Enterprise Institute, the Hudson Institute and others that have since merged the ambitions of the Reagan administration with those of the current Bush regime.

One of George W Bush's "thinkers" is Richard Perle. I interviewed Perle when he was advising Reagan; and when he spoke about "total war", I mistakenly dismissed him as mad. He recently used the term again in describing America's "war on terror". "No stages," he said. "This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq...this is entirely the wrong way to go about it. If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely and we don't try to piece together clever diplomacy, but just wage a total war...our children will sing great songs about us years from now."

Perle is one of the founders of the Project for the New American Century, the PNAC. Other founders include Dick Cheney, now vice-president, Donald Rumsfeld, defence secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, deputy defence secretary, I Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, William J Bennett, Reagan's education secretary, and Zalmay Khalilzad, Bush's ambassador to Afghanistan. These are the modern chartists of American terrorism.

The PNAC's seminal report, [Rebuilding America's Defences: strategy, forces and resources for a new century](#), was a blueprint of American aims in all but name. Two years ago it recommended an increase in arms-spending by \$48bn so that Washington could "fight and win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars". This has happened. It said the United States should develop "bunker-buster" nuclear weapons and make "star wars" a national priority. This is happening. It said that, in the event of Bush taking power, Iraq should be a target. And so it is....

Time and again, 11 September is described as an "opportunity". In last April's *New Yorker*, the investigative reporter Nicholas Lemann wrote that Bush's most senior adviser, Condoleezza Rice, told him she had called together senior members of the National Security Council and asked them "to think about 'how do you capitalise on these opportunities'", which she compared with those of "1945 to 1947": the start of the cold war....

In the *Los Angeles Times*, the military analyst William Arkin describes a secret army set up by Donald Rumsfeld, similar to those run by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and which Congress outlawed. This "super-intelligence support activity" will bring together the "CIA and military covert action, information warfare, and deception". According to a classified document prepared for Rumsfeld, the new organisation, known by its Orwellian moniker as the Proactive Pre-emptive Operations Group, or P2OG, will provoke terrorist attacks which would then require "counter-attack" by the United States on countries "harbouring the terrorists".

In other words, innocent people will be killed by the United States. This is reminiscent of [Operation Northwoods](#), the plan put to President Kennedy by his military chiefs for a phoney terrorist campaign - complete with bombings, hijackings, plane crashes and dead Americans - as justification for an invasion of Cuba. Kennedy rejected it. He was assassinated a few months later. Now Rumsfeld has resurrected Northwoods, but with resources undreamt of in 1963 and with no global rival to invite caution.

You have to keep reminding yourself this is not fantasy: that truly dangerous men, such as Perle and Rumsfeld and Cheney, have power. The thread running through their ruminations is the importance of the media: "the prioritised task of bringing on board journalists of repute to accept our position".

"Our position" is code for lying.... [T]he more insidious lies, justifying an unprovoked attack on Iraq and linking it to would-be terrorists who are said to lurk in every Tube station, are routinely channelled as news. They are not news; they are black propaganda.

This corruption makes journalists and broadcasters mere ventriloquists' dummies. An attack on a nation of 22 million suffering people is discussed by liberal commentators as if it were a subject at an academic seminar, at which pieces can be pushed around a map, as the old imperialists used to do....

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother and sister to the suffering poor of our wars. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I

Speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and dealt death and corruption ... I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

The following words were written at the time of the Vietnam war by a Buddhist priest *and I quote:*

Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the hearts...of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.

As if this were not bad enough, we must also consider the looming threat of climate chaos, a threat which urgently demands our spiritual and physical resources if humankind is to survive.

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in our "War on Terror." If we do not stop our "War on Terror" immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that the entire "War on Terror" is a criminal conspiracy in large part orchestrated by the Government of the United States. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins...we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.

I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

Number one: End all bombing.

Number two: Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

Three: Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in the Middle East or

elsewhere by curtailing any further military buildup.

Four: Realistically accept the fact that we cannot be arbiters in the negotiations which must take place between the warring parties in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Five: Set a date that we will remove all our troops.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any person who fears for his/her life under a new regime ... Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country, if necessary. Meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways ... We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative method of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service, we must clarify for them our nation's role ... We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every person of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits their convictions, but we must all protest.

Now while we most certainly need a popular crusade against the "War on Terror", this war is a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, ... So such thoughts take us beyond the "War on Terror", but not beyond our calling as sons and daughters of the living God.

In 1957, a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution.... we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which has now justified the presence of U.S. military advisors in all corners of the world. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces ... It tells why American Drones ... are being used ...

It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Sixty-four years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical

revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men and women home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death....

Whatever it takes we must reorder our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood and sisterhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against terror. War is not the answer. Terrorism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons.

War is itself the ultimate form of terrorism. And our embrace of nuclear weapons is the

worst aspect of this. In this regard we must demand a halt to the effort to [modernize nuclear weapons](#), so they can be more “easily and efficiently used”. We must press for immediate worldwide negotiations through the UN to ban the possession of all nuclear weapons. In this regard the US should take the initiative in stating its goal to give up all its nuclear weapons.

The United States should sign all international agreements prohibiting the possession and use against biological and chemical warfare agents and should halt research into these agents.

If we are truly against violence [w]e must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of violence grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men and women are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality must be born.

It is a sad fact that because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of terrorism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations...have now become the arch antirevolutionaries.... Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.”

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of our species and the rest of nature as well. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-

Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another, for love is God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He or she that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.... If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and God's love is perfected in us." Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day.

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word." Unquote.

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in human affairs does not remain at flood—it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace...and justice throughout the...world ... If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons and daughters of God, and our brothers and sisters wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men and women, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message—of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

As that noble bard of yesterday, James Russell Lowell, eloquently stated:

*Once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.
Though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong
Though her portions be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.*

And if we will only make the right choice, we will be able to transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of peace.

I return to the words of Bishop Conedera and repeat them.

The root of humanity's downfall and disgrace comes from the deliberate opposition to truth ... this reality that has been intentionally deformed in our country throughout... years of war against the people.

To open ourselves to the truth and to bring ourselves face to face with our personal and collective reality is not an option that can be accepted or rejected. It is an undeniable requirement of all people and all societies that seek to humanize themselves and to be free....

Truth is the primary word, the serious and mature action that makes it possible for us to break the cycle of death and violence and open ourselves to a future of hope and light for all ...

Discovering the truth is painful, but it is without a doubt a healthy and liberating action.

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1. King says "1954," but most likely means 1964, the year he received the Nobel Peace Prize.