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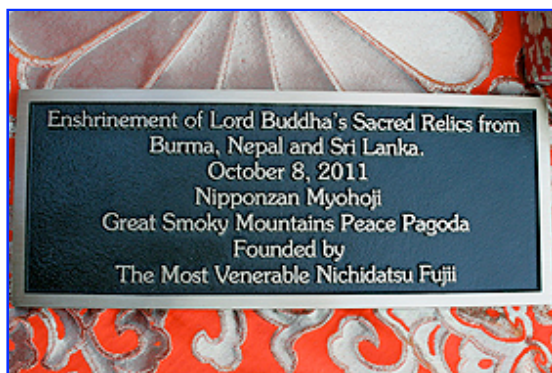
This is a hypertext representation of Jim Douglass' speech with his original [footnotes](#) and some additions. Hyperlinks and additional notes by [David Ratcliffe](#) with the assistance and approval of Jim Douglass.

James W. Douglass is co-founder of the [Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action](#) and author of many books including *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why it Matters* [[Orbis Books/Simon & Schuster Touchstone paperback](#)] and *Gandhi and the Unspeakable: His Final Experiment With Truth* [[Orbis Books](#)] [1].

## Guruji, Gandhi, and Terrorism

by James W. Douglass

8 October 2011



Speech Delivered at the Ceremony for  
[the Enshrinement of Sacred Relics](#) at  
[The Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda](#)

*Na mu myo ho rengo kyo.* (bowing to the Buddha in all)

Guruji taught us by his life the nonviolent practice that will overcome war and terrorism—*tangyō raihai*—bowing to the Buddha in everyone.[2]

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Anwar Al-Awlaki.[3]

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Barack Obama.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Osama bin Laden.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, George W. Bush.

I bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters who belong to Al-Quaida.

I bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters who belong to the United States Joint Special Operations Command.

And I pray that we all bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters as Guruji and Gandhi did, venerating the lives of everyone without exception and resisting nonviolently the evils of war and terrorism.

Terrorism is the use of violence to intimidate a population or government into granting demands.

I believe the terrorism that has inflicted the most damage on the world is the warmaking terrorism of my own government, the United States of America. War, as waged by the United States, has terrorized much of the world—beginning with this nation’s terrorism over the land’s First People, who have welcomed us here today with prayers and great compassion.

Our nation’s warmaking has terrorized the world abroad for the sake of its granting our demands: from the firebombing of Tokyo and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the systemic use of violence to intimidate people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to, in more recent days, our warmaking in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It was ten years ago that our government began terrorizing Afghanistan by war. That war is part of a much larger battlefield which covers most of the planet. By the end of this year, the U.S. military will be conducting special operations in 120 countries, in about 60 percent of the world’s nations.[4] That ever-expanding secret war across the globe has included hundreds upon hundreds of assassinations, whether by drones or Special Forces teams, and is the descendant of the CIA’s notorious Operation Phoenix that terrorized the Vietnamese with similar night raids and assassinations.[5] On the night Osama bin Laden was killed, “special-operations forces in Afghanistan conducted 12 other missions,” assassinating between 15 and 20 targeted individuals.[6] According to the Defense Department official who gave these figures, it was not an unusual night for Special Operations. “He likened the routine of evening raids [and assassinations] to ‘mowing the lawn’”[7] Our government’s systemic terrorism has become so routine, so accepted by the media and the public, that an official can compare it to “mowing the lawn” without fear of protest.

Until this century, the U.S. government seemed to have the privilege of inflicting terrorism on other parts of the world without our own people being struck by terrorism at home. Then came the shock of 9/11. We, too, were targeted. But by whom?

[The Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth](#) have provided overwhelming evidence that buildings don’t fall down the way World Trade Center Buildings 1 and 2 supposedly did on 9/11 from being hit by jet planes—the way WTC 7 did without being hit by any plane at all.[8] Those buildings must have come down by controlled demolition—meaning an inside job. Did Al-Quaida have the access and resources to set up the demolition of those three buildings on 9/11? If not, then who did?

There were important, unrecognized precedents to 9/11 within the United States related to the warmaking terrorism our forces inflicted on other countries. At the same time as the CIA and U.S. Special Forces terrorized Vietnam, they also terrorized the United States. The terrorism that caused the most damage in our own country was the chain of assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. The evidence in all four cases points directly to covert intelligence operations launched from high-level sources. Consider what we lost in this country by the assassinations of a peacemaking president,[9] two revolutionary prophets,[10] and a president-to-be who was integrating their insights. The murders of those four leaders were carried out covertly by U.S. agencies, and then covered over for the last half century by waves of propaganda.[11] They were devastating acts of terror. The terrorism of those assassinations was critical in discouraging a broadening movement for nonviolent change in the United States.

Because we did not as a people overcome our psychic denial and rise up nonviolently against the systemic assassination of our leaders, the military-industrial complex took increasing control over

the United States.[12] Today it is in almost total control—and perhaps on the verge of making that control explicit.

Our current government policy of making assassinations the centerpiece of U.S. warmaking provides dangerous options to the military-industrial complex. The creation of a “hit-list” of enemies abroad, following the example of the CIA in the Cold War and the Vietnam War, is tailor-made for regime change in our own government. The current administration’s commitment to warmaking by covert action and assassination has set up President Obama and other elected officials for a total military-industrial takeover—at the point of many covert action guns. The assassination politics that took the lives of Osama bin Laden and U.S. citizens Anwar Al-Awlaki and his companion, Samir Kahn, can be turned covertly against any U.S. citizen who is thought to represent a threat, including the president. It happened in the case of the Kennedys, King and Malcolm. It can happen again to Obama and to us. We are all in the same boat.

Yet that can be a providential truth, if we can see our situation in common with 60 percent of the world’s people living in the sights of our government’s guns. In fact, 100 percent of the world lives under the threat of our nuclear weapons. What was once called “a balance of terror” between the United States and the Soviet Union is now a totally unbalanced terror of the United States against the entire world. But all of that is our providential invitation to act nonviolently in solidarity with the whole world. We are being invited, in the spirit of Guruji and Gandhi, into a revolution of total compassion.

Guruji identified a revolution of total compassion with Gandhi. Guruji said that Gandhi’s nonviolent revolution in India fulfilled the *tangyō raihai* practice of Bodhisattva Never Despise. Guruji said:

“What did Bodhisattva Never Despise do? He stopped reading sūtras and instead walked about, bowing to others in reverence. In response, people used force against him. They spoke ill of him and beat him. He would then go away and continue to venerate them with palms together saying, ‘I bow to you because you all shall become the Buddha.’

“... It was India’s Mahatma Gandhiji,” Guruji continued to say, “who came forward and followed in the footsteps [of Bodhisattva Never Despise] in the Era of Declining Dharma. [Gandhiji] was uncompromising in his rejection of violence and held reverence for all. There was not a single person he despised. This was what made it possible to resolve the struggle with Britain without going to war.”

During the last year and a half of his life, Gandhi did indeed follow in the footsteps of Bodhisattva Never Despise, just as Guruji said. Gandhi walked step by step through the bloodbath of a Hindu-Muslim Civil War, in the midst of colossal atrocities on both sides, bowing in reverence to everyone, resisting the violence and reconciling enemies.

Let Gandhi be our example, in the ever-expanding violence of our nation toward the world. In 1947, Gandhi walked through the region of Noakhali, which included 1.8 million Muslims and 400,000 Hindus. The minority Hindus were landowners and professionals. They had grievances from Muslim workers, who, incensed by tales of Hindus killing Muslims elsewhere, carried out savage attacks on Noakhali’s Hindus.

Gandhi and his co-workers committed themselves totally to stopping the violence. They fanned out one by one through the bloody villages of Noakhali—living in the midst of the conflict, rebuilding

homes and reconciling battling neighbors. Their mantra was "Do or Die" Some were in fact murdered, including, in the end, Gandhi himself.

But in the process, nonviolence prevailed. In a seven-week period, Gandhi visited 47 villages, walking 116 miles. He was 77 years old. Every morning he could be seen by the people crossing Noakhali's dangerously slippery narrow bamboo bridges, held high on poles. Gandhi was outlined against the sky, as he went from village to village, revering the people on the opposite sides of the killing. It is an inspiring story of do-or-die nonviolence. It was Gandhi's final experiment with truth, which also included two fasts risking his death that stopped the violence of both Hindus and Muslims in first Calcutta and then Delhi. And he finally succeeded in stopping the civil war altogether—through his own martyrdom, his very final experiment with truth.

In the last moments of his life, Mohandas Gandhi bowed to his Hindu assassin, Nathram Godse, at the same time as his assassin was bowing to him and shooting him to death. As Gandhi fell, blessing his assassin, his last words were of God: "Rama! Rama!"

As we face the towering violence of our own nation, we can remember the do-or-die nonviolence of Gandhi and his co-workers. Gandhi had no illusions. He knew the size of the problem. And he and his community knew the nonviolent way to a solution. They maintained a personal reverence for every person on every side of the revolving massacre. They bowed to the Buddha in everyone. Let us do the same.

At the dedication of the Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda in England in 1979, Guruji stated a vision of unity. He said, echoing the nonviolent faith of Gandhi, "I believe in the possibility of uniting the minds of billions of people in goodness."

Guruji could make that act of faith uniting the minds of the world's people in goodness because he already knew it in his heart. Because I saw Guruji walk this earth as a deeply disciplined teacher, one who like Gandhi lived out nonviolence, I can affirm his great statement of unity as not only visionary. It is based on his realization of who he is, and of who we all are. What he says is realistic. It tells us simply who we are in our heart of hearts, if only we realize it. And we can. Peace is possible.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Anwar Al-Awlaki.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Barack Obama.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, Osama bin Laden.

I bow to the Buddha in our brother, George W. Bush.

I bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters who belong to Al-Quaida.

I bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters who belong to the United States Joint Special Operations Command.

And I pray that we all bow to the Buddha in our brothers and sisters as Guruji and Gandhi did, venerating the lives of everyone without exception and joining together in a revolution of total compassion.

*Na mu myo ho rengo kyo.*

## 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 to see listings of libraries where you live. Alternatively to 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 is funded in part by a grant from the California State Library and the Kahle/Austin Foundation.

1. James Douglass, [Gandhi and the Unspeakable: His Final Experiment With Truth](#) (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012). From the dust jacket:

In 1948, at the dawn of his country’s independence, Mohandas Gandhi, father of the Indian independence movement and a beloved prophet of nonviolence, was assassinated by Hindu nationalists. In riveting detail, author James W. Douglass shows as he previously did with the story of JFK how police and security forces were complicit in the assassination and how in killing one man, they hoped to destroy his vision of peace, nonviolence, and reconciliation. Gandhi had long anticipated and prepared for this fate. In reviewing the little-known story of his early experiments in truth in South Africa the laboratory for Gandhi’s philosophy of satyagraha, or truth force, Douglass shows how early he confronted and overcame the fear of death. And, as with his account of JFK’s death, he shows why this story matters: what we can learn from Gandhi’s truth in the struggle for peace and reconciliation today.

See also: “[Jim Douglass’ new book, Gandhi and the Unspeakable](#), review by by John Dear SJ, 14 February 2012, *National Catholic Reporter*.

2. From the Great Smoky Mountain Peace Pagoda page on [Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii](#):

The Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii [1885-1985], more commonly known as Guruji, is founder of the Buddhist religious order, Nipponzan Myohoji, which is dedicated to working for world peace through Peace Walks and the construction of Peace Pagodas.

Born August 6, 1885 in Aso, Kyushu Island, Japan, he became a Buddhist monk at age 19 in opposition to the tendencies of the time, which strongly encouraged a military career. At age 32, following much study and severe ascetic practice, he arrived at the realization that his mission—to spread world peace—would be accomplished through the practice of beating a drum and chanting

Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo

Guruji first traveled to India in 1931 to return countless times in the next 52 years. During his pilgrimage and missionary work he developed deep spiritual ties with the nonviolent independence movement and with Mahatma Gandhi himself who bestowed the name “Guruji” on him and who took up the practice of drumming and chanting which Gandhi continued for the rest of his life.

Guruji and his disciples have walked through all the continents beating the drum, chanting and offering prayers for peace. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 marked the dawn of the nuclear age, and Guruji recognized the grave danger in humanity’s new and unprecedented capacity for self-annihilation.

After WWII, Guruji began constructing Peace Pagodas as a means to build a universal, spiritual foundation for peace in this world. Peace Pagodas [stupas in Sanskrit] enshrine holy relics of the Buddha. Guruji began building his first Peace Pagoda in Hanaokayama in Kyushu Island, Japan immediately after the war, offering a new vision and hope not only amid the deprivation of post-war Japan but to the entire world. Today, Peace Pagodas exist throughout the world and continue to be built by Nipponzan Myohoji and others in a practice directly from the Lotus Sutra.

3. From [American Civil Liberties Union](#): “Anwar Al-Awlaki (a.k.a. Anwar Al-Aulaqi) was an American-born Muslim

cleric who was killed by U.S. forces in a targeted drone strike. Al-Awlaki was never charged of a crime. In 2010, the ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights brought a lawsuit on behalf of Al-Awlaki's father, challenging the government's asserted authority to carry out "targeted killings" of U.S. citizens located far from any armed conflict zone. We argued that such killings violate the Constitution and international law. The case was dismissed in federal district court in December 2011."

See Also: Center for Constitutional Rights' presentation of information on its and the ACLU's lawsuit, [Al-Aulaqi v. Panetta](#), filed on 18 July 2012, and

- o "[In assassinating Anwar al-Awlaki, Obama left the Constitution behind](#), Memo or no memo, the administration lacks any legal principle behind the killing of the anti-American American citizen"  
David Dow, *The Daily Beast*, 16 March 2012
  - o "[Execution by secret WH committee](#), Reuters describes the bureaucratic panel that, with no oversight or transparency, orders citizens killed by the CIA"  
Glenn Greenwald, *salon.com*, 6 October 2011
  - o "[The due-process-free assassination of U.S. citizens is now reality](#), Without a shred of due process, far from any battlefield, President Obama succeeds in killing Anwar al-Awlaki"  
Glenn Greenwald, *salon.com*, 30 September 2011
4. As estimated by the U.S. Special Operations Command spokesman, Colonel Tim Nye. Cited by Nick Turse, "[A Secret War in 120 Countries: the Pentagon's New Power Elite](#)," (4 August 2011, *tomdispatch.com*)  
The endless terror war, the cold war's twin, continues to expand its sphere of operations. See Lolita Baldor, "[US Army teams to train Africans as terror threat increases](#)," *Associated Press / Boston Globe*, p. A7, 25 December 2012.
5. See Douglass Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*, published in 1990 and 1992. Find a copy in [a library near you](#). An [online copy on the internet](#) is also available. Consider how today's killing program carried out by our U.S. Drone terror campaign, can be seem as a direct descendant of The Phoenix Program. From [the author's website](#),

Because Phoenix "neutralizations" were often conducted at midnight while its victims were home, sleeping in bed, Phoenix proponents describe the program as a "scalpel" designed to replace the "bludgeon" of search and destroy operations, air strikes, and artillery barrages that indiscriminately wiped out entire villages and did little to "win the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese population. Yet the scalpel cut deeper than the U.S. government admits. Indeed, Phoenix was, among other things, an instrument of counter-terror – the psychological warfare tactic in which members of the VCI were brutally murdered along with their families or neighbors as a means of terrorizing the entire population into a state of submission. . . .

This book questions how Americans, who consider themselves a nation ruled by laws and an ethic of fair play, could create a program like Phoenix. By scrutinizing the program and the people who participated in it, and by employing the program as a symbol of the dark side of the human psyche, the author hopes to articulate the subtle ways in which the Vietnam War changed how Americans think about themselves. This book is about terror and its role in political warfare. It will show how, as successive American governments sink deeper and deeper into the vortex of covert operations – ostensibly to combat terrorism and Communist insurgencies – the American people gradually lose touch with the democratic ideals that once defined their national self-concept. This book asks what happens when Phoenix comes home to roost.

6. Nicholas Schmidle, "[Getting Bin Laden](#)," *New Yorker* (August 8, 2011), p. 41.
7. Ibid.
8. See the [Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth](#) website ([AE911Truth.org](#)), a 501c3 non-profit organization, with on-going educational outreach projects and news. See [9/11: Explosive Evidence - Experts Speak Out](#) (published, Sept 2012), a free 1-hour documentary, also available for purchase as a DVD and streaming on

[iTunes](#), [Hulu](#), and [Amazon.com](#).

See Also: Christopher Sharrett "[Without restraint: 9/11 videos and the pursuit of truth](#), *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, No. 50, spring 2008; and David Ray Griffin, [9/11 Ten Years Later: When State Crimes Against Democracy Succeed](#) (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2011).

9. 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](#)** – the Real JFK Jubilee – not November 22;
  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](#).

For a summary of JFK's turning toward peace during his Presidency that marked him out for assassination, see Jim Douglass, "[The Hope in Confronting the Unspeakable in the Assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy](#)," Keynote Address at the Coalition on Political Assassinations Dallas Conference, 20 November 2009. Many endnotes in this annotated transcript include segments from [JFK and the Unspeakable](#).

10. See Jim Douglass, "'[The Converging Martyrdom of Malcolm and Martin](#),'" Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture, Princeton Theological Seminary, 20 March 2006.
11. A central component of the production of propaganda in the United States is the infiltration of news media by intelligence agencies of the federal government. See [William Schaap's testimony as an expert witness](#) in the [Martin Luther King Assassination Conspiracy Trial](#) held in Memphis, Tennessee from November 15 to December 8, 1999. The King Family were Plaintiffs, represented by William Pepper. In his closing statement to the jury, Pepper summarized Schaap's testimony,

about media distortion and the use of media for propaganda. He gave you the history of how it has developed particularly over the 20th century America but, of course, it is a long-standing activity throughout history in older nations than this.

But [Schaap took you painstakingly through that history](#) down to [the present time when he dealt with the way the media handled Martin Luther King](#), how they handled his opposition to the war in Vietnam, how he was attacked because of that opposition to the war.

Then he moved on. There were similar, comparable attacks on the King family since they decided they wanted the truth out in this case and they decided that James Earl Ray was entitled to a trial, similar media treatment happened to them that happened to Martin, similar loss of contributions and money for the work that happened to Martin back in those days. The same thing.

Bill Schaap led you through that. There were a couple of instances where he referred to [the huge network of ownership and control of media entities all over the world by the Central Intelligence Agency. It is a matter of public record](#). It has appeared in Congressional hearings, Senate

hearings, which most people don't read, don't know anything about, and, of course, the media only covers in sparse fashion, because it is contrary to their interests to show that great numbers of newspapers, radio stations, television stations, may in fact be actually owned by the Central Intelligence Agency in this country as well as elsewhere.

He talked about the numbers of actual agents who work for media companies, who are placed in positions in network television company positions, in newspaper company positions, on newspaper editorial board positions.

If you see the history of how national security cases are covered and this is one, you will be amazed that some of the most liberal columnists, writers, respected journalists, Pulitzer Prize winners, who have all the liberal credentials, when it comes to this kind of case, they all of a sudden are totally with the government because national security cases are a different ball game.

Ambassador Young ran into one at one point in an airport, and he said to him, 'How can you do this, Tony, about this case? You have great credentials in every other way. What is it about this case?' His response was, 'You'll be happy to know my wife agrees with you.' But that was it. That was the end of the response.

The point is on these cases there is a special type of treatment that is given. It is important to understand that across the board. That explains a lot of what we're talking about. Examples: [Column 1, New York Times, November, the article is here, Alton, Illinois, bank robbery, Wendell Rose, Jr., the Times wrote this whole piece, fabricated, whole cloth, that the Ray brothers robbed the bank in Illinois and that's where James got his money and therefore there is no Raul.](#)

The problem was that the article said that the *Times* had conducted a special investigation that paralleled that of the House Select Committee and that of the FBI, and all three investigations indicated this was the case. Case closed, this is where Ray got his money.

The problem is they never talked to the chief of police in Alton, Illinois. They never talked to the president of the bank in Alton, Illinois. There was no investigation. And when those people were talked to by myself or by Jerry Ray, who went down there to turn himself in – You think I did this, I'm prepared to turn myself in – the guy said, [Go away, you've never been a suspect.](#) Isn't that amazing, out of whole cloth. But it appears, and that's the mindset that the people have.

You heard [Earl Caldwell](#) say he was sent to Memphis by his national editor, *New York Times* national editor, Claude Sitton at the time, and told to go to Memphis and his words were "[nail Dr. King.](#)" Nail Dr. King. That is what he said he was told was his mission here in Memphis as a *New York Times* reporter. I can go on. But these are examples of what happens with the media.

Now, Bill Schaap told you the impact of that out of thirty-one years is very devastating, is very hard to hear this for thirty-one years and have somebody come along and say, No, you've been told the wrong thing and here are a whole set of facts that are uncontrovertible and this is why you've been told the wrong thing.

The reaction is still, Oh, yes, that's interesting, but the next day we still believe, [because it is almost implanted neurologically.](#) That's the problem that this kind of distortion, media propaganda abuse, just raises.

Mr. Jowers here, the defendant, was a victim of that. They gave him – ABC gave him a lie detector test and [they told him at the end of that lie detector test that he had failed,](#) why was he doing this, was he looking for money, he had failed this lie detector test.

You heard from a cab driver [[James Adams](#)], who has nothing to gain by this, take the stand and say, yeah, he drove those ABC people to the airport, took them to the airport, and he heard their conversation. His ears perked up when he heard Jowers' name because he heard them, the guy in the front, [the examiner, said, I couldn't get him to waver,](#) I couldn't get him to waver. They were



commenting on how much he remembered in so much detail and why he remembered so much detail.

There is no question about him failing this test. They couldn't get the defendant to lie. And yet that program was broadcast, was put out to masses of people in this country to believe to this day that the defendant lied, that he lied.

12. Concerning the dynamics of mass denial, see Jim Douglass, "[A Letter to the American People \(and Myself in Particular\) On the Unspeakable](#)" 1999, updated in 2012; and E. Martin Schotz, [History Will Not Absolve Us: Orwellian Control, Public Denial, and the Murder of President Kennedy](#), (Brookline, Mass.: Kurtz, Ulmer, & DeLucia Book Publishers, 1996). See also: E. Martin Schotz, "[The Waters of Knowledge versus the Waters of Uncertainty: Mass Denial in the Assassination of President Kennedy](#)," COPA Conference, 20 Nov 1998, Dallas, Texas. An excerpt from this talk articulates how the perception of reality is altered through the process of mass denial:

The lie that was destined to cover the truth of the assassination was the lie that the assassination is a mystery, that we are not sure what happened, but being free citizens of a great democracy we can discuss and debate what has occurred. We can petition our government and join with it in seeking the solution to this mystery. This is the essence of the cover-up.

The lie is that there is a mystery to debate. And so we have pseudo-debates. Debates about meaningless disputes, based on assumptions which are obviously false. This is the form that Orwell's [crimestop](#) has taken in the matter of the President's murder. I am talking about the pseudo-debate over whether the [Warren Report](#) is true when it is obviously and undebatably false. The pseudo-debate over whether the Russians, or the Cubans, or the Mafia, or Lyndon Johnson, or some spinoff from the CIA killed the President. These are all part of the process of crimestop which is designed to cover up the obvious nature of this assassination. And let us not forget the pseudo-debate over whether JFK would or would not have escalated in Vietnam. As if a President who was obviously turning against the cold war and was secretly negotiating normalization of relations with Cuba,<sup>[14]</sup> would have allowed the military to trap him into pursuing our war in Vietnam.

Since the publication of [History Will Not Absolve Us](#), what I have found most striking is the profound resistance people have to the concept of pseudo-debate, a resistance in people which is manifest as an inability or unwillingness to grasp the concept and to use it to analyze their own actions and the information that comes before them. Even amongst "critics" who are very favorably disposed to my book, I note a consistent avoidance of this concept. And I see this as part of the illness, a very dangerous manifestation of the illness, which I want to discuss further.

Perhaps many people think that engaging in pseudo-debate is a benign activity. That it simply means that people are debating something that is irrelevant. This is not the case. I say this because every debate rests on a premise to which the debaters must agree, or there is no debate. In the case of pseudo-debate the premise is a lie. So in the pseudo-debate we have the parties to the debate agreeing to purvey a lie to the public. And it is all the more malignant because it is subtle. The unsuspecting person who is witness to the pseudo-debate does not understand that he is being passed a lie. He is not even aware that he is being passed a premise. It is so subtle that the premise just passes into the person as if it were reality. This premise – that there is uncertainty to be resolved – seems so benign. It is as easy as drinking a glass of treated water.

But the fact remains that there is no mystery except in the minds of those who are willing to drink this premise. The premise is a lie, and a society which agrees to drink such a lie ceases to perceive reality. This is what we mean by mass denial.

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