

The Conspiracy of the Century | Jim Douglas

Four deaths, one goal: Maintaining the Empire of War. The killings of JFK, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and RFK removed the men who wanted to change the nation into a force for peace and restraint. I sit down with author and peace activist Jim Douglass to trace the pattern and the stakes. Links: Jim Douglass books at Orbis Books: <https://orbisbooks.com/products/martyrs-to-the-unspeakable-vol-2> Jim Douglass writings archive at Ratical: <https://www.ratical.org/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic> Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Welcome and four assassinations 00:03:11 Dates scapegoats and blame 00:05:13 CIA Angleton and cover scripts 00:14:05 Deep machinery of US power 00:20:21 Cold War peace and Kennedy diplomacy 00:26:10 Hiroshima to Iran war logic and profit 00:35:43 Racism propaganda and violent ideas 00:45:14 Poor People's Campaign and courage now 01:00:45 Conclusion

#Pascal

Welcome back to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, and today I'm joined by a very fascinating author to talk about his book. With me is Jim Douglas, the author of **Martyrs to the Unspeakable: The Assassinations of JFK, Malcolm, Martin, and RFK.** The book is a heartbreaking look at the four assassinations that defined 1960s America and, arguably, world affairs for decades. Jim, welcome.

#Jim Douglas

Thank you, Pascal. It's wonderful to be here with you.

#Pascal

It's great having you here, and I'm very happy that we can talk about your work. On the one hand, we'll, of course, look at the book, and the first question I have is why these four assassinations are so important in your view. But we also said we're going to make this a dialogue, so I'll let you explain a little about the four assassinations, and then we'll go back and forth. So please, tell me about the four assassinations and why those four are so important to you.

#Jim Douglas

Wow, they've changed my life—Dr. King's especially. And I think our failure as a country—I'm talking about the USA right now—is that we're basically an amnesia nation. When it comes to John F. Kennedy and his assassination, which was the foundation for killing the other three, that was the

stifling of a movement for change that could have turned the United States of America around, and with it, the rest of the world to a large extent, because of the power of this terrible, terrible force in the country—the Pentagon, the CIA, the National Security Agency, the whole works.

And I like to see the theme, especially through Malcolm's eyes, because he's the one who's generally dismissed as the really hard-nosed, violent character of the bunch. Two days before his death, he said, "It's a time for martyrs now. And if I'm to be one, it will be in the cause of brotherhood. That's the only thing that can save this country and the world." Martyrdom means witness. It means witness to what? I think all four of these were profoundly committed to a single, unified humanity—one that could live in peace and justice with the rest of humanity. And that's the whole story right there.

#Pascal

Can you just give me a quick recap of the years—who died when? JFK, of course, before RFK, but was it Malcolm who was assassinated before Martin Luther King? Can you remind me of the years again?

#Jim Douglas

Yeah. JFK, November 22, 1963. Malcolm X, February 21, 1965—so only a week ago was the anniversary. And, excuse me, Martin Luther King—April 4, 1968. Then only two months later, Robert Kennedy, on June 5—actually just 15 minutes into June 5. It was June 4 that he won the California primary. He would have gone on, as he said, to Chicago—"let's win there." He would have gone on to the Democratic Convention, won that nomination, and he would have beaten Richard Nixon, whom he could deal with quite well. He knew how to defeat him. So we would have had a different president of the United States had he not been assassinated—had Martin Luther King not been assassinated. If just the two of them had lived, he would have been in union with Martin Luther King, who was committed to helping him in any way he could, just as RFK had helped Martin Luther King. They were very close in vision at the end.

#Pascal

So we're talking about five, six very important years in U.S. history, right? These were violent years that also saw, of course, the Vietnam War and these political assassinations—assassinations of people who inspired a lot of America, right? I mean, do we know today, by now, who is responsible for these assassinations? Because all of them are still shrouded in mystery. I mean, JFK first and foremost, right?

#Jim Douglas

Yes and no. The assassinations, when they were happening, all had a scenario that was being followed—just like a movie. This is out there in a lot of people's research, not just mine. In the case of each of the four, there was a scapegoat, very carefully provided by the U.S. government—and specifically, in at least three of those cases, I would say actually all four—by the head of counterintelligence of the CIA, who in those years was a man named James Jesus Angleton. I say “Jesus” with emphasis because he had a Mexican mother who revered Jesus and gave him that name. He was a very brilliant analyst from Yale, who in 1941 created a poetry magazine called *Furioso*, in which he had the leading poets of the United States joining him.

Now, that man, who had a brilliant understanding of language, used it in the opposite direction as director of counterintelligence at the CIA, and also during World War II when he was working for the OSS—the predecessor to the CIA. So you’ve got, um, these people—I identified the three main characters in the first chapter of the book, which is called *From Dimona to Resurrection City*. And Dimona is the nuclear reactor of the State of Israel. Beneath it—the “bomb in the basement”—the levels below are where the preparations for the nuclear weapon were made, the one they still don’t formally acknowledge. They’ve got a couple hundred of them at least. And the entire process is a system extending between the U.S. and, heavily, Israel—one of nine what I call “nuclear extinction nations.”

They’re nations committed to maintaining a nuclear weapons stockpile. And the worst—because it initiated the entire process—is the country I live in now and am a citizen of, and that’s the USA. As Dr. King said in his Riverside Church address, which explains why he was committed both to stopping the Vietnam War and later to launching the Poor People’s Campaign—exactly one year to the day before his assassination—he said, “The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government.” He didn’t say “the U.S. government.” He accepted responsibility for it as his own government. And I think that’s what we all have to do, those of us in this country right now. We have to accept responsibility for that, and for every other country that’s complicit in these weapons. And I’d say a lot of them are, to a very heavy degree.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I’m back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here, but also to my mailing list on Substack. That’s pascallottaz.substack.com. The link will be in the description below.

#Jim Douglas

And now, back to the video.

#Pascal

Yes. And, you know, nuclear proliferation is, of course, one of the greatest threats to humanity. We had a couple of successes down the road with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, first and foremost, because that one created a regime that kind of—well, it couldn't put the genie back in the bottle, but it could at least make sure things wouldn't go as horribly as we thought they might. It took ten years to negotiate that. And that's, luckily, the international treaty we still have, even now that a lot of the nuclear weapons bilateral treaties between the U.S. and Russia are gone.

But do you—because in your book you go into a great many details, but you also look at the overall picture of what these four assassinations meant—is it, for you, that the main storyline of these four is actually about, first and foremost, the violence of the United States, including against its own citizens and its own leaders? Or is it about the system it creates together with these instruments of war, these instruments of Armageddon, at this point?

#Jim Douglas

Well, you've just described two sides of one half of the story, as I understand it. But the other half is what is meant to sustain us. And that is, I think, the very—well, the **coraggio**. We use that word very specifically: the courage. If you talk in theological terms, you'd probably say grace. But the power is in the example of these four who knew grace—that what they were doing would result in their deaths. They were not naive, not at all. And just like Malcolm said two days before his death, he anticipated that he would die in the cause of brotherhood. JFK, you know, when he was deceived profoundly by the Central Intelligence Agency and manipulated in the Bay of Pigs invasion, said, "I want to splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

Now, when the president of the United States says that about his own Central Intelligence Agency—which he said to a chief advisor—of course, everything he did was recorded by them as well as by himself. That did not bode well for his future. Not at all. Not at all. And when Robert Kennedy's—well, the way I view it, and I think the way it was in the Kennedy assassination process—the two Kennedys were serial assassinations. I mean, if you kill one, you have to kill the other, because he's going to do exactly the same thing, especially when he's running for president. If he becomes president, as he was going to be, he was given exactly fifteen minutes—from the time when he, you know, was on that path by winning the California primary until he was shot.

And that was it—he died the next day. Fifteen minutes. That's a message to every subsequent person who runs for that office, and they've taken that message seriously. None of them have had the courage to be a non-proliferation president, which is exactly what John Kennedy was. He was committed to that non-proliferation treaty. He and Robert Kennedy aren't given credit by most of the writers on it. They were profoundly committed to that process, and the nuclear test ban treaty was a direct help to it. That process resulted in their assassinations, and I think other presidents haven't had the kind of courage to do that same sort of speaking truth to the power of their own worst government in the history of the world. And it didn't happen just with Mr. Trump coming to power.

#Pascal

No, but, you know, this is one of the questions that's been on my mind for so long. The United States—not as governed by the Republicans or the Democrats, but as a political system, including the CIA, the FBI, the security services—the fact that those two things cannot be audited by Congress, the fact that the Pentagon hasn't passed a single audit in the last four or five years, disregarding the fact that before that we didn't even have an audit. You know, all the ways in which the political system works in the shadows. I mean, we have now, in U.S. political discourse, the expression "the deep state," but I think the deep state is kind of a bad way of imagining it, because it's not, in that sense, like deep and a swamp.

It's more like interlocking wheels that make the entire thing run, which, in my view, also goes back—must go back—to the way the United States was born and then expanded from thirteen little colonies on the East Coast to a vast continental empire, even stretching beyond the continent to Hawaii at some point, all the way to the Philippines. It's tremendous, right? And then transforming and changing the way that the empire manages itself—that needs a huge machinery. So is it that machinery that's also, ultimately, using weapons against its own, including its leaders? How do you view that? How do you understand the U.S. as a political system?

#Jim Douglas

I think it goes back especially to the Second World War, but certainly before that to the First World War. And as you know from reading the book, the bookends are Albert Camus speaking about this at the end of the Second World War and envisioning a terrible process ahead. He does that just as Paris is being liberated. It's an incredible thing. He says we don't have to be either victims or executioners in this process—we can be something else. And that something else is people of courage. He had courage himself to speak as he did, and he spoke against people in his own circle. And, well, there's a Washington Beltway today that practically all the journalists in the United States run on. And if you get outside that Beltway—well, as you know, I'm not on it, because I have no credibility in Washington, and I'm a Catholic Worker.

A Catholic Worker, you know—Dorothy Day is my founder, and Peter Maurin—they're anarchists. So I come from an anarchist viewpoint, and I think that's basically freeing, totally freeing. I can write anything I want, but it takes a long time to do it. And I'm just reliant on a huge number of other people. I view the whole book as a kind of community, which is basically humanity.

I mean, what you're doing is a profound service to humanity—interviewing people at the heart of the questions of neutrality and trying to work so that enemies can become friends, or that one can be a friend to enemies. Enemies here, enemies there, enemies everywhere—and enemies everywhere when it comes to the country I live in. So I think the real purpose of the book is to go with the story of humanity represented by these four characters, and by all the sub-characters in the book—like the Russian spy who worked so closely with the two Kennedys, Georgi Bolshakov. Another person

who's usually left out of the story. Or the women in this story, who are profoundly involved in the whole thing—like Glenda Grabow, a woman who was totally courageous in identifying Raoul, the man who shepherded James Earl Ray, one of the scapegoats. James Earl Ray certainly did not kill Martin Luther King. And I put all the details of that in the book, you know.

#Pascal

That's why it's also worth reading, because you try to connect these thoughts—the particular assassinations—with the development of the entire century of violence. You know, the century of the First and the Second World Wars, and the Cold War, right? All of those were going on, and they killed millions. I mean, that century killed close to a hundred million people, just in warfare. I was wondering, though, reading that article—you know, these four characters also worked profoundly within the context of the Cold War, of course, coming out of the Second World War, and within the context of this ideological divide, which today, I think, we boil down unjustly to just one of political and economic systems.

But they're also an approach to how to govern. Do you think communism was a real kind of threat to the political system of the United States that we described earlier—something that might have had the power to change it? Because the way the establishment, the CIA establishment, and really everyone in the establishment, was shooting at anything communist—especially if you think about the Red Scare, how it was used to uproot and root out all kinds of ideological opposition to the way the United States was being run. Do you think it was a serious threat, or was that ideological challenge not something these four men were also engaged in?

#Jim Douglas

It didn't have to happen. None of that had to happen. Of course, Russia was our ally—the USSR, the Soviet Union, was our ally in the Second World War. And John Kennedy's American University address is profoundly powerful, and a reason for his assassination, because it bows to Russia, that enemy, by saying, "Look, they carried the brunt of the Second World War." He says that in his American University address. That is not good news to a Central Intelligence Agency.

#Pascal

He admitted something—said something that today nobody would try to bring to mind—that it was the Russians, the Soviets, who fought the fight.

#Jim Douglas

And the U.S. joined late and then acted like they won the war. You know, that's nonsense. Anybody who knows the history well knows it's nonsense. But Kennedy had the courage to say so during the height of the Cold War. Now that is courage. And Khrushchev, his enemy—who had been blocking

all the U.S. stations trying to put any kind of information into the Soviet Union—he put it on the front pages of his newspapers in the Soviet Union, and he put it on all the networks. So Kennedy's American University address got a huge reception in that country and almost nothing in the United States. Everything was reversed.

#Pascal

That's why they were able to work together. That's why they could cooperate, and why they actually understood each other as collaborators in the cause of de-escalating the Cold War and moving toward peace.

#Jim Douglas

It's no accident that the nuclear test ban treaty was negotiated and signed in Moscow. It couldn't have happened in the United States. Kennedy couldn't do that in his own country because he would have been totally undermined. He did an end run around his entire Pentagon and CIA and negotiated it right out of his own office through Averell Harriman, his representative with Khrushchev in Moscow. So anytime there was a question, Harriman just called Kennedy and said, "OK, what do I do now?" You know, Kennedy negotiated that treaty on his own, basically through Harriman and directly with Khrushchev.

Now, that is, from their standpoint, treason. I'm talking about his military and CIA advisors. But from our standpoint, it's humanity, it's unity, it's hope. It means peace, which is a real right. He saw peace as a right—a human right—just as Malcolm X saw his challenge to racism for humanity's sake at the United Nations. So each one of these figures showed huge courage in the context of a state that they all recognized was out to get them, even before they got into it, because their families—each of these families—were being monitored for years before they came to power, before these specific four gained any kind of power.

#Pascal

I wonder why it is that this kind of peace work cannot be done through the systems of governance in the U.S. But, you know, it wouldn't surprise me if Khrushchev had to do something very similar. It wouldn't surprise me. I don't know enough about it. It's just that it seems... I keep coming back to this issue that we are an eight-billion-person planet by now. I mean, it used to be, what was it, three or four billion back in the day? But still, we are a several-billion-person planet, and we are condemned to self-organization—and we are, unfortunately, bad at organizing. I keep thinking that the problem of mass violence is a problem of the organizational capacity of ourselves, of our species. And why is it that once you go through several layers of bureaucracy and administration, this kind of peace work seems to become difficult, if not impossible?

#Jim Douglas

Because of our history—and not dealing with our history—I think that’s a huge part of it. World War Two, in the United States during the past century, was referred to— incredibly—as “the good war.” Can you imagine? That’s the way it was viewed. People even wrote books about “the good war.” That was not a good war. What happened from Alamogordo—the test on July 16th, 1945—to August 6th and 9th, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, those were acts of total criminality, total violence, on a scale that Hitler did not have. You know, he tried, but he didn’t try—Hitler didn’t even try with nuclear weapons.

He wanted to have control of something, and there wouldn’t have been anything left. He recognized that. I had a conversation with Daniel Ellsberg about that at some length, and he pointed out to me, “Look, Hitler—supposedly the creation of the nuclear weapon by the United States was to stop Hitler. But they knew pretty far in, you know, halfway into it, that Hitler wasn’t going for it. They had his scientists; they were coming over to our side.” And so they just did it—for the sake of power and profit. Power and profit. And the profit goes to the arms people.

It’s not like this is a secret. When Pope Francis—representing one of these sort of neutral powers, in the sense that the Vatican at this point is on that side, very helpfully—came and addressed Congress, he pointed out to the members, as they applauded hypocritically, that the problem was weapons manufacturers. He said that in his actual speech. And then he pointed to Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton—somebody else that I knew—as speaking to that problem. But Congress hypocritically applauded and then... did nothing. Did nothing, of course. Of course they did nothing.

#Pascal

Or even the opposite. This is, of course, not part of your study, but what’s happening right now, as we’re speaking, is the preparation for war against Iran—with more than a quarter of the U.S. Navy parked in the Gulf, in front of Iran, openly threatening them with war if they don’t agree to terms that the United States would never even dream of accepting for itself, right? I mean, it would never occur to the United States that anyone would even think of asking them to implement what they’re now asking of Iran. And the sheer fact that the whole discussion is about—I heard this yesterday—that Donald Trump actually said the decision on whether we continue with diplomacy or with war will be up to his negotiating team, Mr. Witkoff and Mr. Kushner.

And one analyst said, like, oh, it’s outrageous that the president of the U.S. outsources war and peace to his underlings, who aren’t even directly part of the U.S. government. But it goes even further than that, because the power to make war or peace should actually rest with Congress under the U.S. Constitution. I mean, it’s layers and layers of breaches—not only of international law, but also of U.S. domestic law—and this absolute, unrestrained use of violence, force, and threat of violence. I believe people like Kennedy and King, and so on, tried to work against that. They constantly tried to somehow constrain the war-making capacity. Maybe I’m overstating it a bit for JFK, but how do you see that one?

#Jim Douglas

I see that one entirely in terms of a man named Mosaddegh.

#Pascal

Hmm.

#Jim Douglas

In 1952, precisely the same people who were responsible for the assassination of John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy in particular—but also Malcolm and Martin—their teams, with the cooperation of Britain especially, overthrew the representative of the people of Iran named Mosaddegh. And without understanding that that's the legacy everybody in Iran knows backwards and forwards—and that it's then complicated by a series of governments sequentially related to the overthrow of Mosaddegh—if we don't know that history about the CIA and British intelligence taking him out, we don't know what the hell is going on.

#Pascal

In a sense, this kind of history of the United States in the 20th century has a lot to do with Iran, right? It's most likely '52. Then there's the revolution—the Iranian Revolution in the late '70s, '79, right? '78. And the Shah in between, and the opposition to Israel, but even...

#Jim Douglas

All of it—every bit of it—is tied into the same power play by the USA.

#Pascal

Why is it that West Asia and the Middle East are so incredibly crucial to the modern United States?

#Jim Douglas

It's not a very big secret—especially oil, and of course the position that the country occupies. But whether it's the one we overthrow down in the Hispanic countries or the one over in the Middle Eastern countries, it's power to the Pentagon. It doesn't run on anything that isn't reliant on oil. You know, these aren't big secrets; these are out in the open. And it started a long time ago. This is a country that has, as you were pointing out, expanded westward and then outward in huge, galloping fashion. And Kennedy did have a different view of all that. He was also working in support of Third World countries. And I have a lot of it in there about Africa.

John Kennedy, when he was first in the U.S. Congress, made a revolutionary speech about Algeria. And people in Algeria know that to this day—that John Kennedy was on their side before they overthrew France. So, you know, that's something that's known to people outside the USA better than to people in the USA. We don't know anything about it—we've forgotten that Kennedy, before he became president, was considered an outsider. And the State Department, which of course was headed by John Foster Dulles, who was Allen Dulles' brother, was outraged—equally outraged with Allen Dulles—when Kennedy made that speech in support of Algeria.

And that was the beginning of him being a member of Congress. That's very important—a very important thing. We don't know these people; we don't know their history. And Robert Kennedy was a very anti-communist guy, you know, during the years from his being in high school to almost being attorney general. But he turned around—and he turned around hard and fast—in regard to his brother. He worked very, very closely with Georgi Bolshakov and Khrushchev through that whole process from the beginning of the Kennedy presidency. You know, sometimes that requires courage—courage, courage, courage, courage.

#Pascal

Oh, yes, it does. It does. The courage to actually go knowingly against people on the inside—right?—in your own system, the people you yourself rely on. Well, it cost them dearly. But we see that in other places as well. And, you know, one of the things that fascinates me is the power of stupid ideas and how much violence they create. I always circle back to Japan. Before the Second World War, the most important argument—in Japan but also outside, in order to understand what Japan did, its own expansionary imperialism—was that the country was so small, smaller than the state of California, and it had 60 million people.

Oh my God. And then I read speeches from professors in Switzerland saying that, in the wildest projections, Japan by the year 2000 would have over 100 million people. If that were the case, they said, the country would starve because there's no way the islands could produce enough food. So we'd have famine and everything, and so on. There was really only one solution—to expand and move the excess population abroad. And that was the whole rationale for a lot of people to say, yes, Japan needs to have overseas territories and go live there.

And, you know, the stupidity of it is, of course, that by the year 2000 they actually had more than 100 million inhabitants—and they didn't starve. Why didn't they starve? Because they figured out you can trade. You can just trade food for nice Toshiba TV sets, right? It works. But this stupid idea that you need to possess land in order to farm food had so much ideological power that it fueled a lot of the violence that came later, once it was filtered through the military, the services, and the political levels. It produced tremendous violence. Which one of the stupid ideas do you think, in the U.S., is responsible for a lot of the violence?

#Jim Douglas

I think it can be seen from different perspectives. The way Malcolm X put it—and Dr. King, to a large extent, too—is racism. I mean, racism. And of course, the racism has been both against Japan and on behalf of Japan. So that's the division of people. Of course, Malcolm saw it in the early days as Black versus white, but it's much more complicated than that. He went to a very important meeting at one point with the hibakusha—maybe you remember that story. When he went to that meeting, the hibakusha, being victims of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, wanted to meet Malcolm X more than anybody else in the United States.

They said, "We're coming to the USA. We want to meet Malcolm X because he put his finger on racism." And they saw—when they came into Harlem, there was the World's Fair going on in New York. But they didn't go to the World's Fair; they went to the "World's Worst Fair," which, in the center of Harlem, was showing off all the apartments and everything so abominable that Black people had to live in. So Malcolm connected that with the victimization of them under nuclear warfare. He didn't quite get the nuclear part, though. I want to be very frank about Malcolm—he hadn't yet reached the point where he understood just how much could be caused by a nuclear weapon from China.

He was very pro-China, but he was pro-China because of what the United States was doing to China. So he had a good perspective in that way. But as his very close friend and disciple, Yuri Kochiyama, points out, he didn't quite get that. Still, he was getting it, and he was getting it fast. Each of these was turning, turning, turning. That's the story—it's the turning, the changing, the courage to change in extraordinary ways. I mean, they didn't live very long. Malcolm and Martin both died at 39 years of age. Were they that young? Thirty-nine. Now just think of Gandhi. How old was Gandhi when he died? Seventy-eight. Twice that. And Gandhi at 39—where would he have been?

He would have been back in South Africa. I mean, he wouldn't have accomplished anything in India—zero. He wouldn't even have gotten to India to begin any of that work he did there. He had left India as an incompetent lawyer, and he would never have accomplished anything. So just imagine thirty-nine more years for Malcolm and thirty-nine more years for Martin, as they were converging, as they were coming together. That picture on the front of the book—of a radiant Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, the only time they ever met—they're just radiant. And that's where they become dead men walking. With that radiance, that's the worst dream possible.

It's a nightmare for J. Edgar Hoover, who actually said—and I put this in the book too—in a conversation that was overheard by a Black waiter, of course, who was invisible to them in the Senate dining room. They didn't see Black people. They didn't realize their conversation was being overheard. And he heard Hoover say to Johnson, who was then the Senate majority leader and soon to be vice president, and eventually president of the United States, "We've got to get those two guys fighting each other—Malcolm X and Martin Luther King." So to see them coming together was just the worst possible nightmare. And that meant they had to be killed. And they were, soon after.

#Pascal

The dream of these leaders was to have both, right? Better international relations abroad, but certainly better internal relations among the people in the United States. Especially Malcolm and Martin, right? They were mainly concerned with a fair society at home, which is also why people kept saying they were communists and so on, and tried to trash-talk them so badly. The issue of peace within— is this also one of the reasons why there's no possibility for peace without? Because the society was just so, so violent, especially in those days?

#Jim Douglas

It's the same issue—I mean, whether it's inside or outside. And that was recognized by these people. John Kennedy gave his American University address on June 10th. On June 11th, the next day, the University of Alabama was being integrated—the very next day. And when he gave the greatest speech he ever did on civil rights, that was the very next day. He did it almost extemporaneously because there wasn't time. I mean, he just delivered it from his heart, and it was a hugely powerful address. And then Medgar Evers was killed an hour later. That's not coincidental. That's not coincidental—a great Black leader being taken out right then. And it was a message also to Kennedy.

#Pascal

It was.

#Jim Douglas

You're next.

#Pascal

It was. But, you know, today the United States is very proud of the civil rights movement and its achievements—and justly so, I believe. It was a very important step for the country and, in a good sense, also a successful one. But on the other hand, what we're seeing is that the system of violence actually learns from that. When I look at how the U.S. military tries to portray itself today—not just the military, but the armed services in general—they present themselves as equal-opportunity employers: anyone, Black or white, female or male, can make a career. And in the end, everybody can go and bomb Iran, right? We're equally nice in this military endeavor. I just wonder what Martin and Malcolm would make of this if they saw it.

#Jim Douglas

I think they would see in it the spirit of the Poor People's Campaign, which has been resurrected by a man named William Barber, who's a bishop now, and by a man named Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, who's a close friend of mine. There's a new Poor People's Campaign going on right now, and it's been active throughout the South, in California, and in Minneapolis. There are a lot of people who've been going out very courageously, in a nonviolent way, confronting ICE in profound ways. And people in the United States are taking courage from the courage of those in Minneapolis right now. So this isn't just a story about what happened in the '60s.

It's a story of what can happen today if we—I'm talking about people like me in this country; you're in Japan right now—we have the main responsibility, because we're the marauders of the world right now. Our government is, and we've got to stop that government. Now, my concern with the movement of people rising up and acting courageously against these people—ICE, who are taking over different cities and so forth—is that we don't know our own history well enough yet to see that they've been killing us in this country, and you're talking about hundreds of millions of people abroad. We'd better talk about both dimensions. ICE has gone global.

It's not just happening in Minneapolis, but it's about the courage to do something that can come together if we bring together Malcolm and Martin, who were the outsiders, with JFK and RFK, who were the insiders, and the integrated lives of these people. The person who envisioned the Poor People's Campaign was Robert Kennedy. I told that story yesterday. In the book, Robert Kennedy—who was probably going to be the next president of the United States if he didn't get killed, and people were worried that he would get killed, and he did get killed—was trying to envision how poor people in the United States could get their lives right in the same way white people were.

And he said, "You've got to take the poor people to Washington." That message went directly to Dr. King through Robert Kennedy's assistant, a guy named Peter Edelman, and his fiancée, a woman named Marian Wright. She took it directly from the swimming pool where Robert Kennedy was coming up with this, saying, "Look, the only way Congress is ever going to act at all is if it's so uncomfortable for them not to act that they'll do something. You've got to have all these poor people who are suffering throughout the country come to Washington. Dr. King, lead them." And that message was taken directly to King by Marian Wright.

And he lit up like the grace of God had been given to him. Now, it's not like he hadn't thought of that himself—he had, a year earlier—but this was coming from Robert Kennedy. That meant a man who might become president of the United States would be working with him on the Poor People's Campaign, and that would have been amazing. That's why Robert Kennedy, just a week before his death, in a huge crowd of supporters in Watts, in L.A., where Black people were mobbing around him, ran to the reporters' car following him and yelled, "Los Angeles is my Resurrection City!" Resurrection City was the city of the Poor People's Campaign. It was all one for him—it was coming together in Watts.

He's dead five days later because of that very fact. But we in the United States have to see the relationship between those two. We shouldn't have somebody who's courageous enough to start doing these kinds of things without knowing that it puts him or her right in the bullseye. Any presidential candidate knows that today, but the people in the United States don't know it well enough. That's propaganda—it's all aimed at us. Propaganda, propaganda, propaganda. The lies are just as bad as the killings, because the killings make the next lie possible, and the lies make the next killing possible. The propaganda we're talking about is massive, and it's directed especially at the people of the United States of America.

#Pascal

Absolutely. And they enable that. You can see it clearly, right? How the entire system is also built around the poverty of the United States. I mean, in Europe and also in Japan, you have social welfare to make sure that people are somehow fine. In the United States—and I've seen that firsthand—you have social warfare. I taught at Temple University's Japan campus for a couple of years. Students come there because they've served for five or six years in one of the U.S. services, and after that, they pay for a college degree. It's like if you sell your soul to the service. And it's not really a service—it's obviously being part of the war system, right? But if you do that, then you get... well, right, it comes with the willingness to sign up for war.

And there are so many layers to that, but they go hand in hand. So if you actually eradicated poverty in the United States—if you actually had a working welfare system that makes sure not that people don't work, but that people don't have to go and sell their soul to Uncle Sam on the battlefield—well, the battlefield itself would drastically change, right? And not everything would look like a potential target to direct poor people toward, right? Because in a sense, it's really convenient. Instead of them walking to Washington, they walk into Tehran, they walk into Baghdad. I mean, it's a win-win solution for the oligarch class that then doesn't need to worry about those pesky poor people, right? It's absolutely despicable, but it's very, very hard to get that point across. And the people who try—yeah, they die. They die.

#Jim Douglas

But all empires fall, and this empire is going to fall—and it's going to fall soon. The reason being that the government in charge now is about as bad as you can get. And you can't get much worse than that. But you can ignite a nuclear war. And I believe in Dr. King's vision, which is that what can be, must be, and will be. That is, human freedom was not created—there's a spirit, and you can call it what you want. There's a spirit in the universe, the moral arc of the universe—he used that term, or "the arc of the moral universe." It's basically the same idea. And you can call it God, you can call it the Buddha. As an atheist, you just call it truth.

But truth is common to them all, and that's what Gandhi chose—truth is God. Satyagraha, the power of truth. So the power of what you're doing in Japan is helping more than you realize, because it's

going out widely through this broadcast. Whatever you do, it's getting out there. But the power of propaganda is to make us think we can't overcome it. That's not true. We can overcome it.

#Pascal

We can, and we will. The question is just how many lives it's still going to cost—hopefully fewer. So, how... maybe a last question here. These people, the four that you looked at, were courageous, ingenious, creative in the ways they approached their work. But if you had to pinpoint what went wrong—what you'd say they could have done differently so it might have worked—is there something? Something we need to learn from their mistake? What was it?

#Jim Douglas

I think if they could—well, I don't really think it works to say much about them being different. The key is us being different. We could be different by understanding just how much they managed to do at, you know, 39 years of age. Of course, King is idolized, but he's idolized by the government that killed him. We've got a holiday every year for the man who was assassinated. But his wife, Coretta King, had equal courage to him. She was ahead of him on peace and justice—he learned from her. We've got to remember that there would be no Martin King if there wasn't Coretta, in terms of the courage she gave and passed on to him.

These people aren't just individuals—they're families. The Kennedy family is a very courageous family, and the government has managed to divide that family now. That's a success on the part of the United States government. Anytime a family with the courage of the Kennedys, or the courage of the Shabazz family—Malcolm's family—or the courage of the King family, when they're like this, that's what the government wants. So the question is, how can we unite in the way they were doing, recognizing that it's going to cost your life and mine if we do it well enough? If we do it well enough, you're going to get taken out, brother. Of course.

#Pascal

Of course.

#Jim Douglas

Of course. Yes. Success always ends in the grave. No, no, no—it continues, because then you are resurrected, and people walk with your courage. More and more people walk with your courage because of your courage. It doesn't end with the grave; it's resurrected in other people. That's the whole nature of resurrection. The nature of resurrection is that the example is imbibed—it's the witness. You are giving a witness to truth, and that truth carries over, widens, and strengthens. That's the Gandhian vision.

#Pascal

Yes, but you see, what we need to figure out is how—not just after 100 years to get there, but after 2,000 years—because the system of violence managed to transform the greatest hippie who ever walked the Middle East, Jesus Christ. They transformed him into a reason to go to war, including the Crusades, right? Including everything. It's perverse how the system of violence manages to use and abuse these apostles of pacifism and brilliance. Jesus Christ was a brilliant orator, obviously a brilliant mind, and obviously the same kind of person that those four you looked at were made of. And the system then transforms them, bit by bit, into the reason again to go to war. And that's what we finally have to stop—after 2,000 years—so we don't keep transforming peace lovers into reasons for war.

#Jim Douglas

We have a way to do that because there was a Hindu, not a Christian. Yes, a Hindu who came along—a Hindu. So forget all the Christian stuff, except to take it seriously from its origin in the man you were just talking about, Jesus of Nazareth—a guy up in Galilee who was a rebel, a big rebel against the Roman Empire—and he died on a cross. Probably a Palestinian rebel, yeah? I would say so. I've been to Nazareth, and the people in Nazareth are basically Palestinians. But let's not—it's not an open debate one, yes. The point is, he was definitely a Jew, and he was a Jew up against the Roman Empire. And then a guy took him very, very seriously as a systemic thinker.

I mean, Gandhi was a journalist like you. He was a journalist like you, but he spoke the truth. And that truth he developed into—truth on one side, love on the other—same thing, satyagraha. And so he went up against the British Empire and changed it. That's pretty big. That's pretty big. And there were a lot of alternatives to what happened, and they were very, very violent. I know that history. I wrote a book about Gandhi and his assassination. And he was assassinated, but he lived to be 78. Yes, yes. The British Empire is a little bit more—you know, I wouldn't call them humane—but they didn't target him quite as well as the United States does its victims.

#Pascal

They take a little more time. They have a cup of tea first.

#Jim Douglas

What I'm trying to say is, there's a power in us—in you, in what you're doing, in Gandhi—in the power of truth that I recognize in you. You're making a big difference. I am too, to some degree. But we've got to recognize that. The empire wants us to think we're going to make no difference whatsoever. But we are making a difference.

#Pascal

Jim, I love the force in your voice, and I love the spirit in which you talk. It's absolutely amazing. We should do this again—meet again, maybe with a couple of colleagues—and brainstorm about how to organize this resistance to the stupidity that's about to consume us. We have to finish this interview, but for people who want to read more from you—you've written a lot of books—is there a specific place they should go to find your books, to find your writings?

#Jim Douglas

Well, Orbis Books USA—just Orbis Books—will have the books I've written most recently, which are *JFK and the Unspeakable*, *Gandhi and the Unspeakable*, and *Martyrs to the Unspeakable*, which is the one we're talking about now. Excuse me. But there's a website, and it's a very good one, that has all my writings integrated in a lot of ways beyond those three books and the previous ones I've written—I've written seven books. It's called Ratical, R-A-T-I-C-A-L.org, run by a man named David Ratcliffe. He's playing with his own name—so as a radical, he's Ratical.

#Pascal

I like that. I do too.

#Jim Douglas

And he's done a very good book that's just come out, *Understanding Special Operations*. It was a special operation that overthrew our brother Mosaddegh. And special operations are going on all the time by this government of assassins—special operations. So, David Ratcliffe at Ratical.org, R-A-T-I-C-A-L—he's got all my writings on this that are outside the seven books I've written.

#Pascal

Okay, I'll put the links to your books and also to that homepage in the description box below this video. Everybody, go and check it out. Jim Douglas, thank you very much for your time today.

#Jim Douglas

Oh, thank you so much, brother. You are powerful—thank you. Powerful in the truth.