

Although Scarred by Violence, We Must Not Be Scared Into Silence

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by Edward Curtin, *Behind the Curtain*

May 3, 2023

The world has been haunted by human violence since time immemorial. There are untold millions (billions?) of people all over the world who have been scarred by it in all its forms. There are two basic responses: one is to try to return that violence with violence and defeat one's enemy; the other is, in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words, to "not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding" through a non-violent response. Politicians usually embrace the former, while those who are called dreamers advocate the latter.

Between these two, there are various mixed responses, with sane political leaders calling for mutual respect between countries and an end to aggressive provocations leading to warfare, such as occurred with the United States provoking the war in Ukraine.

We have entered the time when the destruction of all life on earth through nuclear war is imminent unless a radical transformation occurs. If the word imminent sounds extreme, it is worth considering that there will be no announcement. The time to speak up is now. It is always now.

Great literature speaks to the issue of violence at the

deepest levels.

Homer's *Odyssey* is the classic case of violent revenge. At the end of the story, Odysseus, who was scarred in youth by a wild boar, finally returns home from the Trojan War after ten years of wandering. Doubly scarred now by the horrors of war with its horrendous slaughters (see *The Iliad*), he arrives at his home disguised in a beggar's rags. His nursemaid from childhood recognizes him from the scar on his thigh. In his house he finds scores of suitors who are hitting on his wife Penelope. He is enraged and steps onto the threshold, rips off his rags, and systematically massacres every last one of them. Flesh and gore swim in the blood-drenched room, while in the courtyard twelve unfaithful serving maids hang from their necks. This is the quintessential western story of revenge where the wounded hero kills the bad guys and the violent beat goes on and on.

It appeals to our lesser angels, for while Odysseus's rage is understandable, its consequences leave a toxic legacy.

But there is another response that draws on another tradition that is symbolized by Jesus on the cross, executed by the Roman state as a subversive criminal. He didn't die on a private cross, for his crime was public. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi are famous exemplars of non-violent resistance in modern times, as they too were executed by the state. Non-violence seems, on the surface at least, to be less effective than violence and contrary to much of human history.

If it is, however, we are doomed. For we have nuclear weapons now, not bows and arrows and spears. We have nuclear weapons hitched to computers. Digital weapons of multiple sorts and mad leaders intent on pushing us to the brink of extinction.

The United States' instigation of the war in Ukraine against Russia and its push for war with China are current prime

examples. They are part of the continuing vast tapestry of lies that Harold Pinter spoke of in his 2005 Nobel Address. He said, in part:

The United States supported and in many cases engendered every right wing military dictatorship in the world after the end of the Second World War. I refer to Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile. The horror the United States inflicted upon Chile in 1973 can never be purged and can never be forgiven. . . . The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them.

This is still true, as John Pilger has just warned us in a powerful article: ["There Is A War Coming Shrouded In Propaganda. It Will Involve Us. Speak Up"](#)

The rise of fascism in Europe is uncontroversial. Or 'neo-Nazism' or 'extreme nationalism,' as you prefer. Ukraine as modern Europe's fascist beehive has seen the re-emergence of the cult of Stepan Bandera, the passionate anti-Semite and mass murderer who lauded Hitler's 'Jewish policy,' which left 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews slaughtered. 'We will lay your heads at Hitler's feet,' a Banderist pamphlet proclaimed to Ukrainian Jews.

Today, Bandera is hero-worshipped in western Ukraine and scores of statues of him and his fellow-fascists have been paid for by the EU and the U.S., replacing those of Russian cultural giants and others who liberated Ukraine from the original Nazis.

In 2014, neo Nazis played a key role in an American bankrolled coup against the elected president, Viktor Yanukovych, who was accused of being "pro-Moscow." The coup regime included prominent "extreme nationalists" – Nazis in

all but name.

The U.S. led support for this war must stop. Who will stop it?

Homer told us something quite important once upon a time, as did many poets, artists, and writers in the twentieth-century. They warned us of the monsters we were spawning, as Pilger says: "Arthur Miller, Myra Page, Lillian Hellman, Dashiell Hammett warned that fascism was rising, often disguised, and the responsibility lay with writers and journalists to speak out." He rightly bemoans the absence of such voices now, as writers have disappeared into post-modern silence, a part of the cultural war on dissent.

On a subtler and more personal note than Homer's tale of revenge, we have the testimony of Albert Camus who was part of the Resistance to the German occupation of France during WW II. At the beginning of his beautiful, posthumous, and autobiographical novel, *The First Man*, Camus tells us about Jacques Cormery (Camus), who never knew his father, a French soldier killed in World War I – the misnamed grotesque War to End All Wars – when Jacques was eleven months old. Years later, when he is forty years old and horrors of WW II have concluded, Jacques visits the cemetery in France where his father is buried. As he stands over the gravestone in this massive field of the dead, silence engulfs him. Camus writes:

And the wave of tenderness and pity that at once filled his heart was not the stirring of the soul that leads the son to the memory of the vanished father, but the overwhelming passion that a grown man feels for an unjustly murdered child – something here was not in the natural order and, in truth, there was no order but only madness and chaos when the son was older than the father. The course of time was shattering around him while he remained motionless among those tombs he no longer saw, and the years no longer kept to their places

in the great river that flows to its end.

The tale continues, as did Camus's, who always supported the victims of violence despite harsh criticism from many corners, from the left and from the right. He wrote a famous essay, "Reflections on the Guillotine," against capital punishment, based on his father's nauseating experience of seeing a man executed by the state. After hearing this story from his grandmother, he would regularly have "a recurrent nightmare" that "would haunt him, taking many forms, but always having the one theme: they were always coming to take him, Jacques, to be executed."

Furthermore, Camus warned us not to become murderers and executioners and to create more victims, when he wrote a series of essays shortly after WW II for the French Resistance paper, *Combat*. – *Neither Victims nor Executioners*. He wrote that yes, we must raise our voices:

It demands only that we reflect and then decide, clearly, whether humanity's lot must be made still more miserable in order to achieve far-off and shadowy ends, whether we should accept a world bristling with arms where brother kills brother; or whether, on the contrary, we should avoid bloodshed and misery as much as possible so that we give a chance for survival to later generations better equipped than we are.

Which leads me to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and his run for the U.S. presidency in this most dangerous time. He is a man not scared into silence despite all the efforts to censor him.

From a very tender age he was scarred by death; is surely a wounded warrior, not one of those who went to an actual war, but one who had a different war forced upon him when he was nine and fourteen years-old, when his uncle and father were assassinated by the CIA. Some repress the implications of

such memories; he has faced them and allowed them to spur him to truth and action.

No boar gored him, nor has he slain suitors in his house, because he has taken, not the road of revenge, but that of reconciliation, despite having lost his father and others to demonic government forces. This is the way of non-violence, a path unfamiliar to most of those seeking political office.

I don't know his inner thoughts about this, but I read his words and actions to decipher where he is trying to take this very violent country. He is a non-violent warrior in the spirit of Gandhi's truth force or *satyagraha*. Not a passive non-action, but an active resistance to evil and violence. Not one seeking revenge on all the warmongers and Covid liars (which does not preclude legal prosecutions for crimes), but one who seeks to reconcile the warring parties. To appeal to our higher angels and not the demons urging us to renounce the good, but to the love that is our only hope.

I am not saying he is a pacifist. Such a term muddies the water. He is clearly committed to the defense of the country if it were ever attacked. But he is emphatically opposed to the endless U.S. attacks on other countries. He knows the vicious history of the CIA. He is a very rare political candidate committed to reconciliation at home and abroad. He is waging peace.

Like his father Senator Robert Kennedy and his uncle, President Kennedy, he is anti-war, committed to ending the endless cycle of overseas wars sustained by the military-industrial complex and the corporations who feed at the trough of war spending. He opposes the policies of those politicians who support such endless carnage, which is most of them, including most emphatically Joe Biden. He realizes the danger of nuclear war. He tells us on his website, [Kennedy24:](#)

As President, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. will start the process

of unwinding empire. We will bring the troops home. We will stop racking up unpayable debt to fight one war after another. The military will return to its proper role of defending our country. We will end the proxy wars, bombing campaigns, covert operations, coups, paramilitaries, and everything else that has become so normal most people don't know it's happening. But it is happening, a constant drain on our strength. It's time to come home and restore this country. . . . We will lead by example. When a warlike imperial nation disarms of its own accord, it sets a template for peace everywhere. It is not too late for us to voluntarily let go of empire and serve peace instead, as a strong and healthy nation.

Those are very strong words and I am sure he means them. But he is opposed by demonic forces within the U.S., what former CIA analyst Ray McGovern aptly calls the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-MEDIA-Academia-Think-Tank complex (MICIMATT). They run the propaganda shit show and will throw lie after lie (have already done so) at Kennedy and exert all their pressure to make sure he can not fulfill his promises. Their propaganda is endless and aims to hypnotize. Pinter described it thus: "I put to you that the United States is without doubt the greatest show on the road. Brutal, indifferent, scornful and ruthless it may be but it is also very clever. As a salesman it is out on its own and its most saleable commodity is self-love."

It is this self-love and American exceptionalism that Bobby Kennedy will have to counteract by emphasizing the humanity of all people and their desire to live in peace. He will have to make it very clear that the U.S. government's involvement in Ukraine was never humanitarian, but from the start was part of a plan to disable Russia. That is was an effort to continue the Cold War by pushing closer to Russia's borders.

Only fools think that revenge and violence will lead to a

better world. It may feel good – and I know the feeling – to strike back in anger, but it is only a vicious circle as all history has shown. Revenge only brings bitterness, a cycle of recriminations and reactions. Reconciliation is the way forward, but it can only become a reality by an upswelling of resistance of good people everywhere to the lies of the war-loving propagandists who are leading us to annihilation.

RFK, Jr. can not do it alone. He can lead, but we need a vast chorus of millions of voices to resist, in Pilger's words, "the all-powerful elite of the corporation merged with the state and the demands of 'identity'." If not, democracy will remain notional. Kennedy is so right to say that the U.S.A. cannot be an empire abroad and continue to be a democracy at home. Silence must be replaced with resistance and his words made real by millions of people opposing the killers.

Writing in another time of extremity, but writing truly, Camus, said:

At the end of this tunnel of darkness, however, there is inevitably a light, which we already divine and for which we only have to fight to ensure its coming. All of us, among the ruins, are preparing a renaissance beyond the limits of nihilism. But few of us know it.

So let us fight with words and actions. As MLK, Jr. told us about the U.S. war against Vietnam: "There comes a time when silence is betrayal."

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