

# Daniel Ellsberg's Sacrifice

Mourning Truth

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*Daniel Ellsberg died at the age 92 from pancreatic cancer on June 16, 2023. I'm chagrined that I did not know more about Ellsberg's life at the heart of American military decision-making until his death brought those stories forward. Daniel Ellsberg was at the core of American nuclear-war strategic planning from the Eisenhower through Nixon administrations.*

Daniel's mother had wanted him to be a concert pianist, which career he pursued until she was killed in a car accident when Daniel was 16. After her death he studied Economics at Harvard, graduating summa cum laude in 1952. That same year he married Carol Cummings, the daughter of a Marine Corps Brigadier General, then began further studies of Economics at King's College, Cambridge under a Woodrow Wilson fellowship. Those studies were directed towards a Ph.D. upon his return to Harvard. However, in 1954, as the Korean war became fixed in an armistice, Ellsberg joined the US Marine Corps, earning an officer's commission and serving until 1958, including responsibilities as a Company Commander.

From 1958 through 1962 Ellsberg worked in Nuclear Strategy at the Rand Corporation, while completing his Economics Ph.D. at Harvard. His Ph.D. dissertation paper in the field of Decision Theory, "Risk, Ambiguity and Decision" was pertinent to economics and the prosecution of nuclear war. It describes what came to be known as the "Ellsberg Paradox". This describes human aversion to uncertainty of risk. Given choices that are of basically equal risk, humans have a strong proclivity to choose the defined risk over the undefined risk, to choose the known evil over the unknown evil. This leads to "non-utilitarian" decisions in both economics and war and may reflect an underlying human assumption of deception risk whenever probabilities are not clearly defined.

What we know Daniel Ellsberg for is his principled decision to reveal the 7,000 pages of analysis he had done on the decision-making pertaining to the Vietnam War in 1967-1968,

after he returned from two years in South Vietnam, where he worked for the US State Department. Ellsberg's detailed analysis, showing pervasive irrationality, dishonesty and graft at all levels of decision making throughout the war, came to be known as "The Pentagon Papers".

In early 1968 the American public was confronted directly with evidence that they had been lied to by the President and the military, and that the US was losing the Vietnam War, when the Tet Offensive broke out, and every major city in South Vietnam became embroiled in street fighting, some falling under Vietcong control. Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King were both assassinated while taking popular anti-war political stances. Ellsberg began attending peace gatherings, while still working for Rand, and was deeply [influenced by](#) Gandhian activists from India.

While listening to a draft resister, Randy Kehler, speak in 1969, Ellsberg was feeling patriotic pride for him and for America, when Randy calmly stated that "he was very excited that he would soon be able to join his friends in prison". His two year prison sentence was about to commence. Ellsberg experienced a sobbing epiphany from Randy's profound altruistic action, which brought him to consider revealing his own detailed knowledge of the corruption, immorality and hopelessness of the Vietnam War.

By the end of 1969 Ellsberg and Rand colleague Anthony Russo had made multiple photocopies of the Pentagon Papers, and Ellsberg was visiting sympathetic Senators, urging them to enter the documents into the Senate record. When this was unsuccessful, he resolved to release the copies to newspapers and to temporarily go into hiding, both of which brought the Pentagon Papers very much to the attention of American voters. These Pentagon Papers, which Ellsberg had created through his research of classified DoD records, embarrassed the government by revealing presidential lies to the American people and also to Congress.

Following over two weeks of this publicity, with the ongoing release of records still blocked by the courts, Ellsberg surrendered himself, to potentially face 115 years in prison under the Espionage Act, while Russo faced 35 years. The Supreme Court decided that the New York Times could no longer be legally prevented from publishing the rest of the documents, and the Washington Post had also begun publishing them. Senator Mike Gravel entered over 4,000 pages of Pentagon Papers into the Senate record.

In court, the sword hung over Ellsberg's head as he was prevented from explaining the moral reasons for his actions to the jury. In 1973, after revelations of the burglary of his psychiatrist's office to read his files, and of other illegal government actions, including offering the judge the directorship of the FBI for convicting Ellsberg, all charges were dismissed by the court. See [this](#).

Daniel Ellsberg was a holder of special secrets. Keeping special secrets induces the holder to discount information from those who do not know the secrets, and to lie and mislead them since sharing the secrets is not an option. He described this effect to Henry Kissinger in late 1968, as Kissinger sought information about the Vietnam War and was about to gain above-top-secret security clearances. See [this](#).

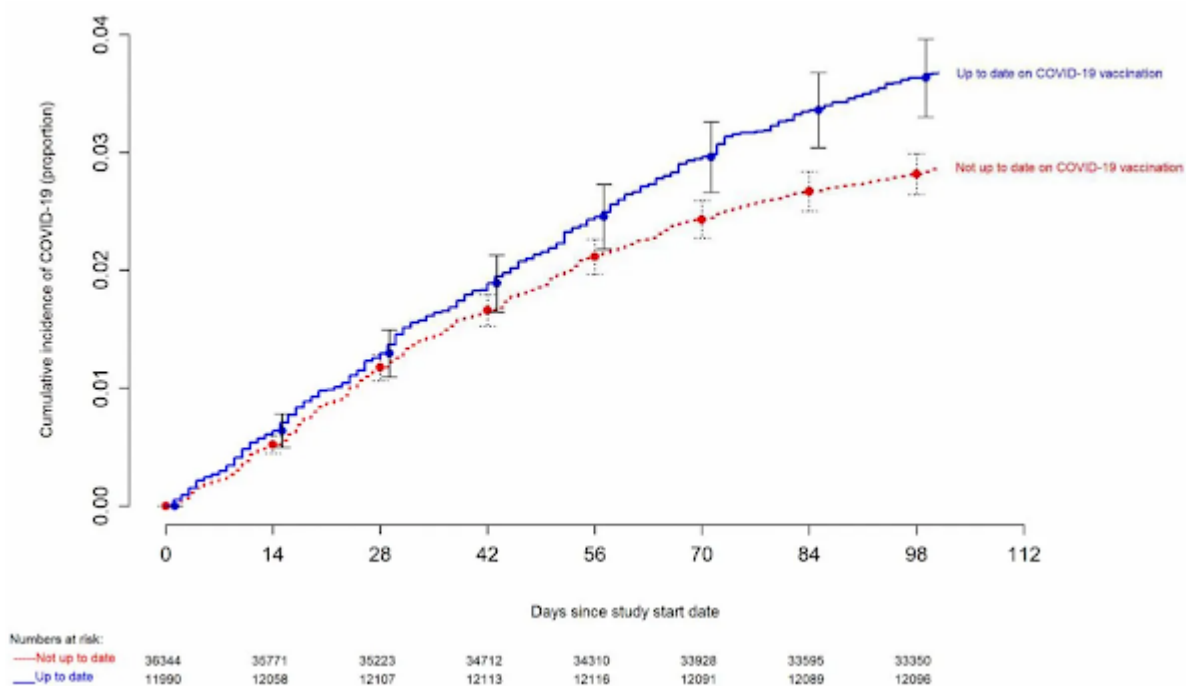
Gandhian activism, which influenced Ellsberg, and was the philosophical ground for his epiphany, illustrates the morality of the practitioner, compared to the immorality of the

overlord or colonial power. On a deeper, karmic level, the altruistic action of sacrificing one's own well being or life for the good of others, while selfish power-actors unjustly harm and enslave fellow humans, might even be seen as a form of white-magic.

In recent years many of us have seen the government lies, this time, almost in lock-step across the world, compelling people to isolate, and preventing them from even learning about effective antiviral therapies for COVID, while preventing their physicians from prescribing effective treatments, or even knowing that they exist. The one path to freedom was promised to be provided by novel gene-therapy vaccines, so people waited patiently and received these injections with feelings of great relief.

Others of us in the practice of medicine had done independent research, followed clinical trial preprints when they became available, treated our patients with vitamin D, zinc, hydroxychloroquine, then ivermectin, and macrolide antibiotics to reduce both secondary bacterial infections and inflammation in the lungs. We did not have special top-secret knowledge but Pfizer, the FDA and Department of Defense did have it. See [this](#).

There were leaks showing high rates of miscarriage which were covered up. Myocarditis in children became apparent in the spring of 2021 and it is now apparent that the "up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations" catch COVID at a higher rate than the "not up to date". See [this](#).



Some of us have lost our jobs or medical licenses for our treatment of our patients, or our stands for bodily autonomy against COVID vaccine mandates, even without researching Gandhian activism.

It is enough to discern right from wrong, truth from lies, and to stand publicly for truth and to defend human rights.

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