

# FBI's "Suicide Letter" to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Dangers of Unchecked Surveillance

By [Global Research News](#)

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**Note:** This article by Electronic Frontier Foundation was originally posted in 2014.

*The New York Times has published an [unredacted version](#) of the famous "suicide letter" from the FBI to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The letter, recently discovered by historian and professor Beverly Gage, is a disturbing document. But it's also something that everyone in the United States should read, because it demonstrates exactly what lengths the intelligence community is willing to go to—and what happens when they take the fruits of the surveillance they've done and unleash it on a target.*

The anonymous letter was the result of the FBI's comprehensive surveillance and harassment strategy against Dr. King, which included bugging his hotel rooms, photographic surveillance, and physical observation of King's movements by FBI agents. The agency also attempted to [break up his marriage](#) by sending selectively edited "personal moments he shared with friends and women" to his wife.

Portions of the letter had been previously redacted. One of these portions contains a claim that the letter was written by another African-American: "King, look into your heart. You know you are a complete fraud and a great liability to all us Negroes." It goes on to say "We will now have to depend on our older leaders like Wilkins, a man of character and thank God we have others like him. But you are done." This line is key, because part of the [FBI's strategy](#) was to try to fracture movements and pit leaders against one another.

The entire letter could have been taken from a page of GCHQ's [Joint Threat Research and Intelligence Group](#) (JTRIG)—though perhaps as an email or series of tweets. The British spying agency GCHQ is one of the NSA's [closest partners](#). The [mission of JTRIG](#), a unit within GCHQ, is to "destroy, deny, degrade [and] disrupt enemies by discrediting them." And there's little reason to believe the NSA and FBI aren't using such tactics.

The implications of these types of strategies in the digital age are chilling. Imagine Facebook chats, porn viewing history, emails, and more made public to discredit a leader who threatens the status quo, or used to blackmail a reluctant target into [becoming an FBI informant](#). These are not far-fetched ideas. They are the reality of what happens when the surveillance state is allowed to grow out of control, and the full King letter, as well as current intelligence community practices illustrate that reality richly.

KING,

[REDACTED]

King, look into your heart. You know you are a complete fraud and a great liability to all of us Negroes. White people in this country have enough frauds of their own but I am sure they don't have one at this time that is any where near your equal. You are no clergyman and you know it. I repeat you are a colossal fraud and an evil, vicious one at that.

[REDACTED]

King, like all frauds your end is approaching. You could have been our greatest leader.

[REDACTED]

But you are done. Your "honorary" degrees, your Nobel Prize (what a grim farce) and other awards will not save you. King, I repeat you are done.

[REDACTED]

The American public, the church organizations that have been helping - Protestant, Catholic and Jews will know you for what you are - an evil, abnormal beast. So will others who have backed you. You are done.

King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do (this exact number has been selected for a specific reason, it is a definite practical significance). You are done. There is but one way out for

KING,

In view of your low grade, abnormal personal behavior I will not dignify your name with either a Dr. or a Reverend or a Dr. And, your last name calls to mind only the type of King such as King Henry the VIII and his countless acts of adultery and immoral conduct lower than that of a beast.

King, look into your heart. You know you are a complete fraud and a great liability to all of us Negroes. White people in this country have enough frauds of their own but I am sure they don't have one at this time that is any where near your equal. You are no clergyman and you know it. I repeat you are a colossal fraud and an evil, vicious one at that. You could not believe in God and act as you do. Clearly you don't believe in any personal moral principles.

King, like all frauds your end is approaching. You could have been our greatest leader. You, even at an early age have turned out to be not a leader but a dissolute, abnormal moral imbecile. We will now have to depend on our older leaders like Wilkins a man of character and thank God we have others like him. But you are done. Your "honorary" degrees, your Nobel Prize (what a grim farce) and other awards will not save you. King, I repeat you are done.

No person can overcome facts, not even a fraud like yourself. Lend your sexually psychotic ear to the enclosure. You will find yourself and in all your dirt, filth, evil and moronic talk exposed on the record for all time. I repeat - no person can argue successfully against facts. You are finished. You will find on the record for all time your filthy, dirty, evil companions, male and female giving expression with you to your hideous abnormalities. And some of them to pretend to be ministers of the Gospel. Satan could not do more. What incredible evilness. It is all there on the record, your sexual orgies. Listen to yourself you filthy, abnormal animal. You are on the record. You have been on the record - all your adulterous acts, your sexual orgies extending far into the past. This one is but a tiny sample. You will understand this. Yes, from your various evil playmates on the east coast to and others on the west coast and outside the country you are on the record. King you are done.

The American public, the church organizations that have been helping - Protestant, Catholic and Jews will know you for what you are - an evil, abnormal beast. So will others who have backed you. You are done.

King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do (this exact number has been selected for a specific reason, it has definite practical significance). You are done. There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation.

The newly unredacted portions shed light on the government's sordid scheme to harass and discredit Dr. King. One paragraph states:

No person can overcome the facts, no even a fraud like yourself. Lend your sexually psychotic ear to the enclosure. You will find yourself and in all your dirt, filth, evil and moronic talk exposed on the record for all time. . . . Listen to yourself, you filthy, abnormal animal. You are on the record.

And of course, the letter ends with an ominous threat:

King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do it (this exact number has been selected for a specific reason, it has definite practical significance). You are done. There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation.

There's a lesson to learn here: history must play a central role in the debate around spying today. As Professor Gage states:

Should intelligence agencies be able to sweep our email, read our texts, track our phone calls, locate us by GPS? Much of the conversation swirls around the possibility that agencies like the N.S.A. or the F.B.I. will use such information not to serve national security but to carry out personal and political vendettas. King's experience reminds us that these are far from idle fears, conjured in the fevered minds of civil libertarians. They are based in the hard facts of history.

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