

The Killers Are Everywhere, But Love Endures. Remembering JFK

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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I am writing this on the afternoon of the anniversary of the cold-blooded murder of President John F. Kennedy by a conspiracy organized and led by the CIA on November 22, 1963.

I try to understand these people, how they could so lack human feeling, how they could blow a man's head apart without hesitation. I can't. I see his wife and small children at his funeral.

I think of the drone attacks chosen by President Obama that kill so many innocent people. I try to comprehend his heart. I can't.

I am sickened by the killers everywhere, terrorists of every stripe who have no hesitation at extinguishing lives. I keep picturing the young Palestinian boys blown apart on a beach by Israeli soldiers as they kicked a soccer ball. What did those Israeli soldiers feel? What do they feel now? Do they feel remorse? Are they disturbed?

All over the planet, the killers are at their trade. What did those killers feel as they pumped bullets into so many innocents in Paris?

I try to fathom their minds and hearts. The French government, blood dripping from its hands, savages Libya and Syria; the Americans, more countries than I can count. Their leaders give speeches in their crisp shirts and suits; speeches about more killing of those they'll never see. They seem like zombies to me. How can they do it? Bombs blow up in shopping malls and marketplaces all over the world. Planes with innocents are blown out of the sky. Hooded men execute people. What do the perpetrators feel? I am at a loss as the deadly beat goes on. And I seek hope everywhere.

Do all these killers feel anything? Is it indifference or hate? Am I an innocent who is missing something? I know I am sick at heart.

Here in the United States we live in a systemic bubble of denial, pretending that we, through our government, aren't killing innocent people throughout the world, that we are not a terrorist state, that we have not created terrorists by our systematic violence around the world. We wallow in our innocence and await change through elections. But our elections are about choosing the lesser of two killers.

People talk about elections as if killers weren't involved. Americans care about their candidates. But what about the victims of their candidates—can they picture them dead? They think the lesser of two evils is not evil, as if Hillary Clinton is different from a

Republican rival, Obama different from George W. Bush. All the while we spread deadly violence around the world and create its reciprocation in the process. I think of Fr. Daniel Berrigan's words after the burning of draft files by the Catonsville Nine on May 17, 1968, to protest the American savagery in Southeast Asia.

Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlor of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise. For we are sick at heart; our hearts give us no rest for thinking of the Land of Burning Children. . . . We say: Killing is disorder; life and gentleness and community and unselfishness is the only order we recognize.

And then I think of the lovers. Hope rises in my heart. I need hope. I need the love, as I think you do. I think of all the lovers who have gone before us and the witnesses of abiding faith whose cloud trails behind them. Those who chose life over death, love over killing. Gandhi, King, and all the many other martyrs for love and non-violence. Witnesses all. Those who knew that the circle of violence would remain unbroken until all lovers united in an upsurge of non-violent resistance to the killers everywhere.

I understand the politics of the killers, the political machinations. I know why they kill, but not how they can. Do monsters roam the earth? Where has humanity gone? What are the killers trying to kill—their own deaths?

These thoughts were prompted by remembering JFK and a message sent by a young Parisian, Antoine Leiris. Antoine's wife was killed by gunmen at the Bataclan concert venue in Paris, leaving him with a 17-month-old son and a grieving heart for the love of his life. Rather than returning hatred to her killers, he penned this extraordinary message on Facebook:

On Friday evening you stole the life of an exceptional person, the love of my life, the mother of my son, but you will not have my hatred. So no, I will not give you the satisfaction of hating you. You want it, but to respond to hatred with anger would be to give in to the same ignorance that made you what you are. You would like me to be scared, for me to look at my fellow citizens with a suspicious eye, for me to sacrifice my liberty for my security.

You have lost. The player still plays. I saw her this morning. At last, after nights and days of waiting. She was as beautiful as she was when she left on Friday evening, as beautiful as when I fell head over heels in love with her more than twelve years ago. Of course I am devastated with grief; I grant you this small victory, but it will be short-lived. I know she will be with us every day and we will find each other in the heaven for free souls to which you will never have access. Us two, my son and I, we will be stronger than every army in the world. I cannot waste any more time on you as I must go back to [my son] who has just woken from his sleep. He is only just seventeen months old, he is going to eat his snack just like any other day, then we are going to play like every other day and all his life this little boy will be happy and free. Because you will never have his hatred either.

No doubt there are those who will think that those are nice sentiments, but to focus on the response of one Frenchman to his loss is to play into the hands of those in the West who generated the original violence and who are waging a fabricated war on terror to spread their dominion globally. Perhaps some might think that this is Western propaganda aimed at

eliciting sympathy for Western Europeans at the expense of the millions who've died at the Empire's hands. I don't think so. Antoine Leiris's response is a cri de coeur of such human love and tenderness that it should awaken in us all the urge to turn from hate to love and embrace the only path that will ever end the cycle of violence—non-violent resistance.

Tolstoy put it thus: "As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence—as soon as this happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual. . . . The law of violence is not a law, but a simple fact that can only be a law when it does not meet with protest and opposition."

The personal is the political. By showing us that love is stronger than hate, that he and his son "will be stronger than all the armies of the world," Antoine Leiris, one man grieving for his one woman, has sent a universal message that we avoid at our peril.

When thinking about JFK, his love of poetry, and Leiris's beautiful sentiments, I was reminded of a poem by another Frenchman, Jacques Prevert, the poet beloved by Parisians after the barbarism of WW II. I think he speaks to the deepest part of us all.

Love

This love
So violent
So fragile
So tender
So hopeless
This love
Beautiful as the day
And bad as the weather
When the weather is bad
This love so true
This love so beautiful
So happy
So joyous
And so pathetic
Trembling with fear like a child in the dark
And so sure of itself
Like a tranquil man in the middle of the night
This love that made others afraid
That made them speak
That made them go pale
This love intently watched
Because we intently watch it
Run down hurt trampled finished denied forgotten
Because we ran it down hurt it trampled
it finished it denied it forgot it
This whole entire love
Still so lively
And so sunny
It's yours
It's mine
That which has been
This always new thing
And which hasn't changed
As true as a plant

As trembling as a bird
As warm as live as summer
We can both of us
Come and go
We can forget
And then go back to sleep
Wake up suffer grow old
Go back to sleep again
Awake smile and laugh
And feel younger
Our love stays there
Stubborn as an ass
Lively as desire
Cruel as memory
Foolish as regrets
Tender as remembrance
Cold as marble
Beautiful as day
Fragile as a child
It watches us, smiling
And it speaks to us without saying a word
And me I listen to it, trembling
And I cry out
I cry out for you
I cry out for me
I beg you
For you for me for all who love each other
And who loved each other
Yes I cry out to it
For you for me and for all the others
That I don't know
Stay there
There where you are
There where you were in the past
Stay there
Don't move
Don't go away
We who loved each other
We've forgotten you
Don't forget us
We had only you on the earth
Don't let us become cold
Always so much farther away
And anywhere
Give us a sign of life
Much later on a dark night
In the forest of memory
Appear suddenly
Hold your hand out to us
And save us.

Edward Curtin is a sociologist and writer who teaches at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and has published widely.

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