

# Threatening Anonymous Letter Sent to Martin Luther King Jr. Four Years Prior to His Assassination. Was It From the FBI?

By [Beverly Gage](#)

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*Unknown to the American public and revealed by renowned historian Professor **Beverly Gage** in a 2014 New York Times Magazine article, Martin Luther King Jr. received a hideous and threatening anonymous letter, the purpose of which was to intimidate him.*

*MLK suspected that this letter was an initiative of the FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. According to Prof. Beverly Gage:*

The note is just a single sheet gone yellow with age, typewritten and tightly spaced. It's rife with typos and misspellings and sprinkled with attempts at emending them. Clearly, some effort went into perfecting the tone, that of a disappointed admirer, appalled by the discovery of "hidious [sic] abnormalities" in someone he once viewed as "a man of character."

The word "evil" makes six appearances in the text, beginning with an accusation: "You are a colossal fraud and an evil, vicious one at that." In the paragraphs that follow, the recipient's alleged lovers get the worst of it. They are described as "filthy dirty evil companions" and "evil playmates," all engaged in "dirt, filth, evil and moronic talk." The effect is at once grotesque and hypnotic, an obsessive's account of carnal rage and personal betrayal. "What incredible evilness," the letter proclaims, listing off "sexual orgies," "adulterous acts" and "immoral conduct." Near the end, it circles back to its initial target, denouncing him as an "evil, abnormal beast." ([The New York Times Magazine](#), November 11, 2014)

The letter contained references to MLK's personal life, it intimated that if he did not conform, he could be blackmailed into submission:

The unnamed author suggests intimate knowledge of his correspondent's sex life, ... It concludes with a deadline of 34 days "before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation."

"There is only one thing left for you to do," the author warns vaguely in the final paragraph. "You know what it is."

Martin Luther King was assassinated on August 4th, 1968. According to Beverly Gage, the letter was sent to him in November 1964, four years prior to his assassination:

When the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. received this letter, nearly 50 years ago, he quietly informed friends that someone wanted him to kill himself — and he thought he knew who that someone was. Despite its half-baked prose, self-conscious amateurism and other attempts at misdirection, King was certain the letter had come from the F.B.I. Its infamous director, J. Edgar Hoover, made no secret of his desire to see King discredited. A little more than a decade later, the Senate’s Church Committee on intelligence overreach confirmed King’s suspicion.

Since then, the so-called “suicide letter” has occupied a unique place in the history of American intelligence — the most notorious and embarrassing example of Hoover’s F.B.I. run amok. For several decades, however, only significantly redacted copies of the letter were available for public scrutiny. This summer, while researching a biography of Hoover, I was surprised to find a full, uncensored version of the letter tucked away in a reprocessed set of his official and confidential files at the National Archives. The uncovered passages contain explicit allegations about King’s sex life, rendered in the racially charged language of the Jim Crow era. Looking past the viciousness of the accusations, the letter offers a potent warning for readers today about the danger of domestic surveillance in an age with less reserved mass media.

KING,

In view of your low grade, abnormal personal behavior I will not dignify your name with either a Mr. 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 females 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.

'You Are Done': The letter sent to King by the F.B.I. (One person's name has been obscured because The Times could not verify or disprove the claims about her.)  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

The F.B.I.'s entanglement with King began not as an inquiry into his sex life but as a "national security" matter, one step removed from King himself. In 1961, the bureau learned that a former Communist Party insider named Stanley Levison had become King's closest white adviser, serving him as a ghostwriter and fund-raiser. ... Around the same time, King began to criticize bureau practices in the South, accusing Hoover of failing to enforce civil rights law and of indulging the racist practices of Southern policemen.

This combination of events set Hoover and King on a collision course. In the fall of 1963, just after the March on Washington, the F.B.I. extended its surveillance from Levison and other associates to King himself, planting wiretaps in King's home and offices and bugs in his hotel rooms.

... F.B.I. officials began to peddle information about King's hotel-room activities to friendly members of the press, hoping to discredit the civil rights leader. To their astonishment, the story went nowhere. ... In 1964, the Civil Rights Act passed Congress, and just a few months later King became the youngest man ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

At this point Hoover decided to escalate his campaign. On Nov. 18, 1964 — 50 years ago this week — Hoover denounced King at a Washington news conference, labeling him the “the most notorious liar in the country.” **A few days later, one of Hoover's deputies, William Sullivan, apparently took it upon himself to write the anonymous letter and sent an agent to Miami, to mail the package to Atlanta.** (emphasis added)

[Read the complete article of Prof Beverly Gage](#)

Professor Gage concludes her article with reference to the current F.B.I. director, James Comey, who “keeps a copy of the King wiretap request on his desk as a reminder of the bureau's capacity to do wrong.”

Professor Gage points to 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.”

**[Beverly Gage](#)** is a professor of American history at Yale.

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