



Project Unspeakable

Reader's Theater presentation

The Unspeakable that targeted ML King, the Kennedys and Malcolm X half a century ago now issues threats of a planetary scale. Can witness testimony rouse this generation to nonviolent resistance in the face of nonexistence?

First Church of the Brethren
425 S Central Park Blvd, Chicago
Friday, February 28, 2014, 6:00 p.m.

Words of welcome

Rev. LaDonna Nkosi, Pastor, First Church of the Brethren

Introduction

Duane Ediger

Project Unspeakable

Project Unspeakable was inspired by James Douglass' groundbreaking and meticulously researched book, *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*. Both works challenge the silence that for decades has surrounded the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy.

By shedding light on this history, the Project calls attention not only to the covert, often criminal activities of military, intelligence and security agencies and contractors and their corporate sponsors, but also to the code of silence everyday people agree to out of fear—like the unwritten rules in a family living with addiction. In doing so, it fosters interventions seeking governmental and corporate transparency, accountability and detox, while shouting from the mountaintops that which has been considered Unspeakable. Both are needed if we are to effectively address the multiple social, political, and environmental crises we face.

From History to Page and Stage

James W. “Jim” Douglass, author, activist and theologian, spent fourteen years researching *JFK and the Unspeakable* (2008). Earlier, he lobbied against nuclear war at the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. He and his wife, Shelley Douglass, founded the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action in Poulsbo, Washington in 1977, and Mary's House Catholic Worker in Birmingham in 1993. In 1997 the Douglasses received the Pacem in Terris Award.

Court Dorsey, *Project Unspeakable's* chief scriptwriter, is an actor, playwright and musician in Western Massachusetts. He is also a mediator, circle keeper and conflict resolution trainer who has developed Conflict Resolution Theater, a process he uses with young people.

Duane Ediger, who organized this production, first met Jim Douglass during an international peace march in Israel and Palestine in 1992. (See bio on back of program.)

Voices in the Script

The script (with the exception of the Narrators and Tenay) is made up of actual quotes, which, to the best of the authors' ability, are accurately attributed to each of the 62 characters portrayed. The historical and living persons depicted do not necessarily agree with or endorse the authors' premises or conclusions. With the exception of Jim Douglass, Nina Rhodes, Paul Schrade and Martin Schotz, the real persons depicted are not affiliated or connected with this work in any way. See more details at www.projectunspeakable.com.

Chicago connections

Martin Luther King in Chicago

Warren Avenue Congregational Church hosted Dr. King and the SCLC operation during 1965-66. He also had an office at First Church of the Brethren and preached here on several occasions. His likeness can be seen on First Church's stained glass windows and his vision is being realized within and without her walls.

JFK assassination attempt, cover-up and resistance in Chicago

On November 2, 1963, before a scheduled Presidential motorcade from O'Hare to Soldier Field, Thomas Arthur Vallee and two other men with rifles along the route were arrested. Vallee, like Oswald, had a loner personality and had made public statements against President Kennedy prior to the assassination attempt. Both had served in the U.S. Marine Corps at U-2 bases in Japan. Kennedy cancelled one hour before his scheduled departure.

Abraham Bolden, the first African American Secret Service agent assigned to the Presidential Protective Division, hand-picked by President Kennedy, became a witness to and complained about the FBI's withholding of the Chicago plot story—as well as of the disposition of other Secret Service members to allow President Kennedy to be assassinated—from the Warren Commission. He tells the riveting and spiritually charged story of his subsequent trial, retrial and incarceration in his 2008 memoir, *The Echo from Dealey Plaza*.

5- and 50-year bookends

In a February 8, 1968, speech in Chicago, Presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy disarmed a big lie of the Unspeakable by declaring military victory in Vietnam impossible. Four years before, his brother had been silenced after reaching the same conclusion, a position held by Malcolm X since 1954. King's death would follow in two months, exactly a year after his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, and four months later it would be RFK's turn. His speech ended:

“Reality is grim and painful. But it is only a remote echo of the anguish toward which a policy founded on illusion is surely taking us. This is a great nation and a strong people. Any who seek to comfort rather than speak plainly, reassure rather than instruct, promise satisfaction rather than reveal frustration—they deny that greatness and drain that strength. For today as it was in the beginning, it is the truth that makes us free.”

Half a century later, earth's creatures in every land and sea see the obvious and feel the threat of doom by legalized racism, pillage, murder and terricide. As we face the Unspeakable, what words will Spirit, Resurrection and Life breathe through our lips? Will we love our enemies, or fail them and ourselves by swallowing their lies and our tongues?

Readers

Mary Scott-Boria, a member of First Church since 1968 has been a long-time activist, educator, and social worker in Chicago, involved in many peace and justice causes including anti-racism education and organizing.

Carol Rose, outgoing Director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, has exercised pastoral, poetic and peacemaking gifts since the '70s in North, Central and South America, Thailand, the Philippines, Palestine & Iraq.

Mattie Allen is a Deacon, Outreach Committee member and Board Chair of First Church of the Brethren, and a mother and grandmother. Before retiring she worked with several social service organizations.

Duane Ediger is a carpenter, a solar energy installation apprentice and a volunteer with Christian Peacemaker Teams. He serves as Clerk and Deacon at First Church of the Brethren.

John Cassel, a retired theological educator and school board consultant, serves on the board of On Earth Peace. He and wife Joyce have worked in Palestine with the World Council of Churches.

Elce Redmond is a community and labor organizer who has mobilized and organized the working class on both local and international levels to fight for social and economic justice.

Prexy Nesbitt was raised in Lawndale, teaches African history at Columbia College and has worked on anti-racism or peace/justice issues related to the USA and/or Africa for fifty years.

_____, a writer, teacher and translator, has conducted research on the role that community-based performance can play in facilitating healing from different types of trauma.

Lauren Friesen is David M. French Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan-Flint. He is the author of the two-act play ROTHKO.

Paul Myers has long supported Fair Trade efforts for disadvantaged families around the world. He is involved in two community gardens and is Treasurer of Chicago Community Mennonite Church.

John Volkening, long active in peace and justice struggles, works with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia, with Afghan Peace Volunteers in Afghanistan, and with the Voices for Creative Nonviolence community in Chicago.

Sarah Thompson, Executive Director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, got her start in Indiana in community organizing. She has trotted the globe in service to Mennonite World Conference and advancing black feminism.