

# An Epistle to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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*Dear Bobby,*

*As you know, I have supported your bid for the presidency even before you declared last spring. I have admired and believed in you for years, and when you entered the race I felt hope for the first time in decades that your non-violent impulses, honed by your tragic family history and a deep revulsion for our country's imperial wars and violent history, would triumph and usher in a new era of peace. Despite the naysayers who dismissed you from the start, I said Yes, that you would shock those who ridiculed and maligned you and that you would be the man to carry out President Kennedy's American University speech and fulfill his and your father's legacy of "not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women" because "we all breathe the same air" and "we all cherish our children's futures" and "we are all mortal."*

I suggested that you would heal the divide and not expand it. Seeing you stumble on your way by throwing your full support to the Zionist leaders of Israel has been a body blow to me. At first I thought it might be explained by your reaction to the false antisemitic accusations that were hurled your way once word emerged that you might enter the presidential race. But as time went on it dawned on me that I was wrong and that you were in sync with the powerful Israel Lobby. So now, I feel as if we are in the tenth round of fight for your soul's compassion. That you have not defended the children of Gaza and condemned their massacre by the thousands has shocked and sickened me.

As a scholar of religion and its intersection with politics, I have been meditating on current events.

Religion has for a very long time been used as a cover for slaughtering people and seizing their land. This is true for the United States and Israel. It is built into their theological underpinnings. So it should not be at all surprising that the current Israeli massacre of Palestinians is fully supported by the U.S. government led by President Joseph Biden and by

almost every presidential aspirant. You, however, as a self-styled anti-war candidate are a great surprise to me, although I may be naïve and shouldn't be since you gave your unequivocal support to the Israel government a month ago, following the October 7 Hamas-led incursion into Israel that killed innocent Israelis (many of whom were also probably killed by the IDF as Jonathan Cooke has [reported](#)). Despite that, I still expected your conscience would surely prompt you to condemn what can only be described as genocide, the slaughter of the innocents in Gaza that is ongoing.

You have undermined your claim to “end the forever wars” and to defend children. Why you have done (or not done) this is a question that so many of your supporters and former supporters are asking. Only you can say. Perhaps we might only know if you unequivocally condemned Israel's actions and faced whatever might come your way as a result. This is unlikely, I now realize, but one can still hope. I think it would take a spiritual miracle of moral courage, because of your claim that your historical analysis that you say is sincere and true that Israel now and always has been the just and innocent party and the Palestinians the evil ones. I find your analysis unbelievable and your silence as innocents are being slaughtered indefensible, even as I applaud so many of your other positions, as you know. Everyone knows that running for the U.S. presidency creates strange bedfellows, but your touting of the Israeli propaganda in which you conflate the Palestinian people with Hamas to justify massacring civilians is beyond strange – it is immoral.

I know how much you respect Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and you no doubt have heard his words before.

“And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular – but one must take it simply because it is right.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

Conscience calls to you, Bobby. Be true to that voice within. Politic as it may be, there is a heavy burden of guilt for abandoning the Palestinians to slaughter by silence. King learned this when he saw [those photos of the napalmed and dead Vietnamese children](#) and [was conscience-stricken](#) to come to Riverside Church in New York to give his speech “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence.” You can do the same. The pictures of dead Palestinian children, victims of U.S. support for Israeli bombs, are there to see. Martin quoted your uncle, John, that “those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” He said that we can no longer worship the God of hate and retribution. He said, “Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted.”



Some of the wounded at al-Shifa hospital (Gaza Health Ministry)

You too, Bobby, can break your silence, step up high and let your conscience also leave you no other choice but to condemn the genocide in Gaza. As Martin said, “A time comes when silence is betrayal.”

You say you are making “a moral case for Israel” as the justified party in its seventy-five year long war with the Palestinians. In doing so you have reneged on your campaign promise to emulate President John Kennedy, who would be appalled by your silence. Your website, Kennedy 24, declares that “[you] Kennedy will revive a lost thread of American foreign policy thinking, the one championed by his uncle, John F. Kennedy who, over his 1000 days in office, had become a firm anti-imperialist.” In genuflecting to the Israel genocide while touting your connection to JFK and your father, Senator Robert Kennedy, you have in fact taken a position toward Israel diametrically opposed to theirs. One could sense this coming when under pressure this past summer, you withdrew your support for Roger Waters, a strong Palestinian supporter who was falsely accused of being anti-Jewish, and you then allowed your “friend” Rabbi Shmuley Boteach to say that Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian, killed your father in 1968 when you knew [that was a lie](#) and was part of a sophisticated intelligence conspiracy to blame the patsy who was said to hate Israel. To allow Shmuley to audaciously and heartlessly repeat a CIA trope about your father’s assassination was a telltale sign of worse to come.

For both the U.S. and Israel, the Bible has been used to cover up the crimes of their foundings. They have analogous histories rooted in religious myths. In both cases, the indigenous peoples were considered less than human – savages, infidels – or in the description of Palestinians by the current Israeli Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, “human animals.” Such racist, dehumanizing language has been repeated time and again throughout the American and Israeli narratives used to justify their crimes against those they killed and whose land they stole. The gloss of civilized hypocrisy has been unmasked by such language, just as it was when Hitler repeatedly called Jews “vermin.” Irony aside,

the Nazi rhetoric of denigration and racial superiority to justify exterminating Jewish people has been repeatedly mirrored by American and Israeli leaders, whether it was against the Original Free Peoples of North America, Vietnamese, Koreans, Iraqis, etc. or the Palestinians. It is the master/slave mentality deeply rooted in U.S. and Israel history.

Bobby, you have said that you hope to be the second independent candidate to become president, the first being George Washington. Yet Washington was a racist and slave owner who supported the extermination of the Indian natives so the white settlers could take their land. He himself did so, speculating in Native lands together with most of the other prominent politicians from the early days of the Republic, including Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, Andrew Jackson, et al. For the governors and legislators of the thirteen states it was also open sesame on the seizure of Indian land which required their slaughter in turn.

One can learn this in Peter P. d'Errico's important recent book, [\*Federal Anti-Indian Law: The Legal Entrapment of Indigenous Peoples\*](#), where he makes clear how U.S. law was used to codify such "legal" theft and killing. Such federal law was, as d'Errico writes, a claim of unlimited U.S. power and not really law at all but the suspension of law as it granted the U.S. government complete authority over Native peoples, their lives, and their land. Legal theft, in other words. Like the English justification for their claim to their colonies – the "right of discovery" proclaimed in Henry VII's commission to John Cabot: "to subdue and take possession of any lands unoccupied by any Christian Power" – a series of three Supreme Court rulings in the 1830s by Chief Justice John Marshall were based on the claim of "Christian discovery," which in turn was based on a papal grant from Pope Alexander the Sixth in 1493 that gave to Christopher Columbus's sponsors, Ferdinand and Isabella, ownership of any land Columbus might discover. This divine right required the killing and subjugation of non-Christian infidels and heathens who were considered brute animals, just as the Palestinians are today.

Similar justifications have been used by Zionists for the killing of Palestinians and the seizure of their land in the name of the Biblical Jewish God and his instructions to them. This myth claims that God gave them the ancestral Palestinians' land, therefore, like native peoples of North America who, according to the non-law U.S. Indian law, only had the right of occupancy, the Palestinians could be killed and dispossessed by the God-given rightful owners, which they were in 1948. Netanyahu has made such claims many times, as have his predecessors. He calls for a holy war of annihilation against the Palestinians, based on the Hebrew Bible. This is widely known and has a long history in the Zionist propaganda narrative that has allowed for seventy-five years of killing and the systematic shrinking of Palestinian land to its pitiful size today.

It is interesting to note that the three primary countries that intersect in the use of religious justification for colonial and imperial policies are England, the U.S., and Israel – together with the Papacy and its [\*May 4, 1493 bull Inter Caetera\*](#) issued by Pope Alexander the Sixth to declare Christian discovery. I mention this since I am an Irish-American Catholic, and it was the Irish uprising against the English colonial occupiers that has become a key inspiration for anti-colonial rebels throughout the twentieth century and beyond. I have taken inspiration from my Irish ancestors. This is your heritage also, Bobby, so it becomes even more surprising that you, even as you tout the American Revolutionary War rebel fighters against the English colonialists, would support the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians. As a lawyer, you must be aware of Federal Indian Law and how it, like all law, is rooted in a metaphysics of being human; has presuppositions that are brought to the bar, and in the case of federal Indian law, a Christian nomos at odds with that of Native peoples'.

You surely know that the Israeli assault on Gaza is a massive war crime according to international law, and even within the moderate Catholic just war theory, is, by its distorted proportionality, evil and must be rejected as immoral and a terrible sin.

You claim to want to end all wars but support the ongoing slaughter of thousands upon thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians, including so many children and women. Nor have you said a word against Biden's saber rattling with aircraft carriers, U.S. drones, and assistance for Israel's bloodthirsty assault that raises the threat of a much wider war that could turn nuclear.

Yes, the question is why such silence, which you can break now. I beg you to speak out. You are a man of conscience. MLK, Jr. speaks to us all still.

And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular – but one must take it simply because it is right.

Pax tibi,

Ed

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*This article was originally published on the author's blog site, [Behind the Curtain](#).*

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