

“Four Died Trying”: John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Robert F. Kennedy: A Powerful, Riveting, and Masterful Documentary Series Begins

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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It is hard for those who have not lived through the shattering political assassinations of the 1960s to grasp their significance for today. Many might assume that that was then and long before their time, so let's move on to what we must deal with today.

Let some old folks, the obsessive ones, live in the past. It is an understandable but mistaken attitude that this documentary will quickly shatter, visually and audibly.

The echoes of those guns that killed President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy in rapid succession repeat and repeat and repeat down through the years, and their echoes bang off the walls of all today's news that springs from the cells of all the little digital dinguses that provide a constant stream of distractions and fear porn meant to titillate but not illuminate the connections between then and now, nor those between the four subjects of this illuminating film.

Today we are living the consequences of the CIA/national security state's 1960s takeover of the country. Their message then and now: We, the national security state, rule, we have the

guns, the media, and the power to dominate you. We control the stories you are meant to hear. If you get uppity, well-known, and dare challenge us, we will buy you off, denigrate you, or, if neither works, we will kill you. You are helpless, they reiterate endlessly. Bang. Bang. Bang.

But they lie, and [this series](#), beginning with its first installment (see sneak peek [here](#)), will tell you why. It will show why understanding the past is essential for transforming the present. It will profoundly inspire you to see and hear these four bold and courageous men refuse to back down to the evil forces that shot them down. It will open your eyes to the parallel spiritual paths they walked and the similarity of the messages they talked about – peace, justice, racism, human rights, and the need for economic equality – not just in the U.S.A. but across the world, for the fate of all people was then, and is now, linked to the need to transform the U.S. warfare state into a country of peace and human reconciliation, just as these four men radically underwent deep transformations in the last year of their brief lives.

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[*Four Died Trying*](#), directed by John Kirby, the wonderful filmmaker who made *The American Ruling Class* with and about Lewis Lapham, and produced by Libby Handros, his partner in exposing the criminals that run the country, has just begun streaming.

As I watched the first twenty minutes of this opening episode, I was inwardly screaming, feeling deep in my soul how powerfully the film was capturing the essence of the dynamic, prophetic, and charismatic voices of JFK, Malcolm X, MLK, Jr., and RFK. All shot down – we hear the gun shots – by deep state forces, even as the film artfully juxtaposes this brutality against video clips of new reports, images of advertisements for silly products, and television shows that kept most of the public entertained and distracted during the 1960s carnage. Doing the Hokey Pokey, as the soundtrack plays it, but not turning around in a profound sense, as did the four who died trying to radically change the country and the world for the better. Simply as film art, this documentary is ingenious. And its use of music is great.

I was transported back to the time of my youth. I was startled again by the powerful courage, passion, and eloquent intelligence of those four compelling voices that once lifted my spirits to the heavens, and I felt the despair as well as each assassination followed the other and my spirits sank. It is not nostalgic, I am sure, to say that one is hard pressed to find those qualities in many leaders today. Like others of my generation, I am still trying to grasp the depths of what their assassinations did to me. Bob Dylan, who came to prominence in the midst of it all, referring ironically to his own life and work, has said that his first girlfriend was named Echo. I think I know her, for she echoed down the canyons of my mind as I watched this prologue and continues as I now reflect upon it.

So it does get hard to be objective, if that is what you want. I don't. This not-to-be-missed film is truthful, for it uses vintage footage of what these men said and what was said against them by a government/media intent of distorting their messages and their assassinations. Listen and then research if you have any doubts. See if the film is truthful or manipulative.

As one who has deeply studied these matters, I can attest to the former.

And I can tell you that if you are young and never knew about these four guys and what men they were – not in any macho sense, but as true lovers of human beings, men with chests, as C.S. Lewis described those who were true and brave and undaunted by the then current vibes that sucked the soul out of you, not pseudo-men in the “pumping iron” sense, not men who tried to appeal to your grossest stereotypes – you are in for a great surprise. You will yearn to see them resurrected in others today. In yourselves. As Malcolm X said hopefully, “The dead are arising.”

This 58 minute prologue touches on many of themes that will follow in the months ahead. Season One will be divided into chapters that cover the four assassinations together with background material covering “the world as it was” in the 1950s with its Cold War propaganda, McCarthyism, the rise of the military-industrial complex, the CIA, red-baiting, and the ever present fear of nuclear war.

Season Two will be devoted to the government and media coverups, citizen investigations, and the intelligence agencies’ and their media mouthpieces’ mind control operations aimed at the American people that continue today.

One important aspect of this documentary series – never before done in film – is the way it shows the linkages between these four great leaders. Beside their own words, we hear from their families and associates throughout. Based on over 120 interviews conducted over many years, we hear from the four men’s children, Vince Salandria, James W. Douglass, Mort Sahl, Harry Belafonte, Khaleed Sayyed, Earl Caldwell, Clarence Jones, James Galbraith, John Hunt, Stephen Schlesinger, Andrew Young, Oliver Stone, David Talbot, Adam Walinsky, et al. It is an amazing list of thoughtful commentators who tell the story for the dead men whose living tongues have been silenced, although we are privileged for their fatidic cinematic ghosts to speak to us through archival footage.

In this opening Prologue, I was especially impressed with the words of [Vince Salandria](#), one of the earliest critics of the Warren Commission’s absurd claims, and Adam Walinsky, a former aide and speechwriter for RFK, who made it clear that we are free, no matter what the propagandists tell us. That freedom to think and act, to make connections between then and now, to see the linkages between the four men’s messages and today, is crucial to carry on their legacy. That message ends the Prologue. It is a message of hope in a dark time.

This opening prologue is divided into four parts, each devoted to what each man tried to accomplish. That is followed by a section on how they died and the ways it was buried, ending with an Epilogue on why they died and why it matters today.

All four died fighting the international power structure, the CIA and FBI, the military-industrial complex, the racist ideology central to the capitalist elites’ economic injustice and warfare state – those deep structures of power that have come to be called the deep state. They were brothers in arms, their only weapons being their linked arms in a spiritual war against evil forces. They were men of compassionate conscience, warriors for peace and justice for all. That is why they were killed.

Four Died Trying is a profound documentary. It is good that each episode will be a stand-alone short film – that gives the viewer time to absorb its lessons rather than binging on too much too soon. Once you watch this prologue, with its overview of all to come, you will be

hooked. It is not just revelatory history, but is artistically made, and, dare I say, entertaining. Kirby and Handros are astute to realize that young people demand more than lectures, and it is to the next generations that these voices must be addressed. For although the times have changed, in so many ways we are today faced with all the same problems. The deep wounds of the 1960s were never given careful treatment; they are now suppurating and the infection is spreading.

Then and now. There is a powerful clip in the film of Senator Robert Kennedy giving a speech in Chicago when he has decided to enter the race for the presidency right after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, a massive breakout surprise to U.S. authorities who thought they could contain and defeat the Vietnamese struggle for independence; that they had them trapped. Kennedy has decided to enter the race for President and realizes that supporting a corrupt South Vietnamese government and their ruthless policies aimed at exterminating the Vietcong and North Vietnamese is morally wrong and runs counter to American attestations of the belief in democracy and justice for all. He says about such an impossible military victory:

. . . and that the effort to win such a victory will only result in the further slaughter of thousands of innocent and helpless people—a slaughter which will forever rest on all our consciences and the national conscience of the country.

His was a powerful moral voice. Who is standing with the innocent and helpless people today? And who is standing with the killers? As Martin Luther King, Jr., put it, “A time comes when silence is betrayal.” And procrastination is still the thief of time and conscience whispers those pathetic words: Too Late.

Don’t miss *Four Died Trying*. I am sure it will affect you deeply and force you to think twice over about what is going on today.

Yes, then and now. To slightly alter the song, *As Time Goes By*:

It’s still the same old story.
A fight for love and glory.
A case of do and die.
The world will always welcome lovers
As time goes by.

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Edward Curtin is a prominent author, researcher and sociologist based in Western Massachusetts. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).

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