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**Keynote Address at the 10th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Reflection and Commemoration at DePaul University College of  
Law January 21, 2008: Seasons in the Sun: Reflections on Race  
and the Race for the Democratic Party Presidential Nomination**

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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 10TH ANNUAL  
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. REFLECTION  
AND COMMEMORATION AT DEPAUL  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW  
JANUARY 21, 2008**

*Seasons in the Sun:  
Reflections on Race and the Race for the  
Democratic Party Presidential Nomination*

ANTHONY PAUL FARLEY\*

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*We had joy,  
We had fun,  
We had seasons in the sun,  
But the stars we could reach  
Were just starfish on the beach.<sup>1</sup>*

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\* James Campbell Matthews Distinguished Professor of Jurisprudence at Albany Law School. What follows is based on my Keynote Address at the 10th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Reflection and Commemoration at DePaul University College of Law on January 21, 2008. My Keynote Address was preceded by a screening of *Eyes on the Prize I, Episode 5: Mississippi: Is this America?* (1963-1964). My Keynote Address, here reproduced as a text, was originally a departure from an earlier text. I departed from that earlier text in favor of an immediate reaction to, and a real-time re-composition of, the events of 1963-1964 and 2007-2008, a change inspired by our collective viewing of the *Eyes on the Prize* documentary. This essay, in other words, is a reproduction of my departure from an earlier text. I thank moderator Song Richardson and respondents Luis Fuentes-Rohwer, Janai Nelson and Terry Smith for their excellent questions and contributions. I give special thanks to Sumi Cho, Song Richardson and Charlotte Taylor for making this such a wonderful event. I also thank Susan DeCostanza and her colleagues on the editorial board of the *DePaul Journal for Social Justice*. I thank all of my Albany Law School colleagues. Finally, I thank Astrid and Maria Grahn-Farley, as always, for their love and enthusiasm.

<sup>1</sup> TERRY JACKS, *SEASONS IN THE SUN* (Bell Records 1973).

We had joy and fun and seasons in the sun. Joy. Fun. Seasons in the sun. These three themes will accompany my reflections on the present situation, its past and certain revenants of that past. Stars and starfish, dreams and the dried remnants of things past and a pair of uncertain and unsettling scenes from 1963 and 1964 will guide the way from yesterday to now, this hour, this Key-note Address that you have invited me to present on the occasion of the 10th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Reflection and Commemoration at DePaul University College of Law. This election season may feature first, an end to the long night of the war against the peoples of Iraq; second, and less importantly, a first in the matter of race or sex in the form of a black man, Senator Obama, or a white woman, Senator Clinton, as President. The past, however, is never over – it isn't even past, and our journey to this season can only be understood in terms of the past that is present.<sup>2</sup>

For a short while, the days between Iowa and New Hampshire, we allowed ourselves to think that it was over, or almost over.<sup>3</sup> It seemed as if a corner had been turned. “They said this day would never come.”<sup>4</sup> When Senator Barack Obama spoke after winning the Iowa Caucuses, it was like daybreak, a sunrise that has been a long time coming, an end to the long night of the Bush II regime, a joyous moment that seemed to herald great changes to come.

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<sup>2</sup> WILLIAM FAULKNER, REQUIEM FOR A NUN 92 (1950) (“The Past is never dead. It’s not even past.”).

<sup>3</sup> The Iowa Democratic Caucus took place on January 3, 2008. The New Hampshire Democratic Primary took place on January 8, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Senator Barack Obama, Remarks on Iowa Caucus Night, Des Moines, Iowa (Jan. 3, 2008), *transcript available at* <http://www.newsday.com/news/local/politics/ny-usobam0105-transcript,0,7073760.story> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

And now, as with David Dinkins,<sup>5</sup> as with Tom Bradley,<sup>6</sup> as with Harvey Gantt,<sup>7</sup> it seems as though we are back to the same old song. Senator Hillary Clinton, who arrived at *alma mater* Wellesley College as a Goldwater Republican, and President Bill Clinton, who was born and raised in segregated Arkansas, decided in their panic to make it about race. *A fairy tale*, said Bill.<sup>8</sup> *Inexperienced*, said Hillary.<sup>9</sup> And both Clintons said *not ready*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> American politician, the first black mayor of New York City (1990–94). White voters told pollsters that they intended to vote Dinkins for Mayor of New York City and then an unusually high number of them did not do so. They voted for Rudy Giuliani instead (1993). The white voters who lied to the pollsters were, perhaps, ashamed to tell the truth about the racial orientation of their political lives.

<sup>6</sup> American politician, the first black mayor of Los Angeles. Bradley served an unprecedented five terms (1973–1993). In 1982, white voters told pollsters that they intended to vote Bradley for Governor of California and then an unusually high number of them did not do so. They voted for George Deukmejian instead. The white voters who lied to the pollsters were, perhaps, ashamed to tell the truth about the racial orientation of their political lives.

<sup>7</sup> American politician and architect, the first black student admitted to Clemson University and the first black mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1990, white voters told pollsters that they intended to vote Gantt for United States Senate and then an unusually high number of them did not do so. They voted for Jesse Helms instead. The white voters who lied to the pollsters were, perhaps, ashamed to tell the truth about the racial orientation of their political lives.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Leibovich, *CONTESTED; Rights vs. Rights: An Improbable Collision Course*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 13, 2008, available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B07E5DA153FF930A25752C0A96E9C8B63&sec=&spn=&pagewanted=3> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Jeff Zeleny & Julie Bosman, *Obama Rejects Idea of Back Seat on Ticket*, N.Y. Times, Mar. 11, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/11/us/politics/11clinton.html?scp=2&sq=lack+of+experience+obama&st=NYt> (last visited Apr. 15, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Jeff Zeleny, *Endorsing Obama, Kerry Calls Him Leader of 'Wisdom, Instinct and Vision'*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 11, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/11/us/politics/11obama.html?scp=9&sq=obama+not+ready+&st=nyt> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

When, other than the days between Iowa and New Hampshire, have we heard a black person referred to as *ready* for something like the Presidency of the United States of America? It is not a matter of racism versus sexism or sexism versus racism.<sup>11</sup> No one argues that an Obama administration would do less than a Clinton administration in the fight for women and against patriarchy.<sup>12</sup> So now we are back to the old days.<sup>13</sup> The Bradley Effect, the Dinkins Effect, the Gantt Effect – we are surfing the wave all the way back to the Redemption.

We remember the Redemption. They also remember the Redemption. There are two deep memories of the Civil War, one white and one black, both in conflict, and neither really having anything at all to do with the political surface of things past.

Masters recall that the Confederacy went to war for slavery. War is hell. The losers, who lost their slaves, were in hell – that is to say, still at war with the blacks. It was a war they won in 1876 when they finally Redeemed their gallant South by rescuing its fair form from hands that once picked cotton, from the

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<sup>11</sup> One might investigate the race/sex and sex/race twists and turns and privileging of sex – specifically, white women – over race, every Other, in the strange career of what is called Affirmative Action. When Senator Clinton, in what may be a strange attempt to reach out to young voters, frequently proclaims, in teenage-accented English, “I’m so-o-o-o ready!” she may also be reaching into the part of the collective consciousness that is sometimes able to describe white women as qualified or at least capable of being qualified but almost never able to describe blacks and Others of either sex in the same way.

<sup>12</sup> Senator Clinton’s post-Iowa strategy raises questions about whether a Clinton administration would do as much in the fight for blacks and against whiteness. The questions, further, are made more important in the light of the questionable race politics of President Clinton’s time in office.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Reagan began his first successful campaign for the Presidency with a speech in Philadelphia, Mississippi, a city known only for the murder and mutilation of civil rights workers Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. Reagan’s theme, “morning in America,” when recalled, seems much like a return to the *beautiful white girlhood* of Senator Clinton, who, at the time of the murders, was a Goldwater Republican, like her father. One person’s morning is another’s cause for mourning, and *vice versa*. See *infra* note 29.

black hands of the once and future slaves.<sup>14</sup> Monsters were voting. *What is a slave voter but a monster?* Yes, absolutely, the blacks were monsters; otherwise it would have been monstrous to have treated them as slaves. The fair South was in hell, the place where monsters rule. Union troops marched North in 1877, and the dry white season was over. The monsters were torn limb from limb, gelded or raped or both, set ablaze, and hung from trees where they, strange fruit of the Peculiar Institution, remained hanging for a Century as signs and warnings to other monsters. The strange fruit of the Peculiar Institution are still hanging.<sup>15</sup> That is one memory.

Slaves recall that blacks won the Civil War and saved the Union. The General Strike of the black proletariat left the Confederacy unable to wage war. The self-emancipation of the black worker was our own doing and no one else's. The Grand Army of the Republic did not desire, and at first rejected, the waves of self-emancipated blacks. The blacks, however, were not to be undone. They insisted on the ruin of the Confederacy and as that ruin required a Union victory – that is the victory that the blacks won. No sooner was it won, 1865, than it was undone, 1876. A Presidential Election ended with the question of who lost and who won. The North was allowed to win but only if the South was promised that the Grand Army of the Republic

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<sup>14</sup> On February 26, 1877, leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties met to resolve the disputed presidential election between Samuel Tilden and Rutherford B. Hayes. Under the terms of the compromise, the Democrats did not contest the Electoral Commission's decision to award the disputed electoral votes from three Southern states to Hayes, thus enabling him to defeat Tilden 185 to 184. In return, Republicans promised to withdraw troops from the South, ending Reconstruction. The withdrawal of Union troops allowed white paramilitary groups to terrorize black voters in the South and thereby bring an end to the very brief experiment in democracy in the United States (1865-1877). The compromise between the white North and the white South satisfied the Southern Democrats, and Hayes was declared the winner on March 2, 1877. And not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a century after the Civil War, would blacks again win access to the vote.

<sup>15</sup> The prison industrial complex, for example, is just one branch.

would no longer remain in their land. The General Strike of the once-and-future slaves had been broken by the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution. The commune at the heart of the black proletariat could not blossom within the confines of the legal form. The withdrawal of Union troops, and the imprisonment of black self-organization within the form of law, allowed the white terror to end the effective use of the black franchise for almost a century. Law neither interprets nor applies itself. Where there is power, that is the power that interprets and applies the law. Where there is white power, that is the power that interprets and applies the law. The Civil War Amendments, under the administration of the whites, collapsed like broken levies. The black electorate drowned beneath a hundred-year wave of mutilation. The North and the South reconciled in their whiteness and the former slaves, having forgotten the wilding ways of their self-emancipating days, were once again enslaved. Thus, the former slaves of the whites were once again the slaves of the whites, the feudal bonds were recast as capital, the chattel slaves were now to be wage slaves, a difference without a distinction, as the Redeemers well knew, as the blacks well remember.

These are American memories. We remember the Redemption. Whites remember it too.

White people know how they would vote were they not racist. *I am voting for X* is followed by a vote for Y. Why? Because Y is white, that is why. Why lie? They lie because they do not want to appear as what they are. In Iowa, it was all in the open. When you caucus, it is all in the open—everyone must actually be what they want to appear to be. In New Hampshire, as with other primary states, you enter a small private booth and may vote in line with your most shameful desires, desires that you disavow in public, the desires you may even wish that you did not have, the desires that you claim not to have, desires that resist exorcism, desires like racism. In the caucuses, the angels of our better na-

ture are freed from the individuating shadows and distortions of the voting booth.

Racism is a desire. As it is a desire, observers of racism ought to attend to its psychoanalytic unfolding. Tears from a white woman. Senator Clinton's tears. Anger from a white man. President Clinton's anger. And a black person, Senator Obama, or black people doing and being better (winning/yes, *we can*) or other than expected (racemixing/yes, *we can*). Those three elements – white feminine tears, white masculine anger and unexpected blackness – were there at every lynching party ever celebrated in this country.

Tears of a crystal blue persuasion.

Anger shining like blood in the face.

Blacks strangely out of place.

Tears and anger and place and race.

Blackness so out of place becomes an imperative to replace black with white and red, red like blood in the face, and blue, blue like crystal persuasion. Lynching was the major method of disrupting the black body politic during the century following the Civil War, from the Redemption all the way to LBJ,<sup>16</sup> the same LBJ whose name Senator Clinton used in New Hampshire in an attempt to eclipse and dismiss MLK,<sup>17</sup> and, in the mirror of MLK's dismissal, to reproduce an image of Senator Obama too, as a dreamer, a dreamer like MLK, and not a "doer" like Senator Clinton.

Obama was up 14 points by his measure. Clinton was down 11 points by her measure. Somewhere in the strange arithmetic of distance there is a formula that we know and do not want to know. A white woman wronged. Burning anger from a white man. Unexpected blackness. The teardrop explodes. Lynching. So it seemed in New Hampshire.

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<sup>16</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, 36th President of the United States from 1963 to 1969.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., American Civil Rights Leader (1929-1968).



Hopefully, my reading is a misreading. Hopefully, the corner has been turned. I want to be wrong about everything above and below. I think that Senator Clinton used race in New Hampshire. Senator Clinton, as her support dwindled in New Hampshire, decided to run on the absence of dreams (I do *not* have a dream) and the past (experience) as qualifications. Duration (experience) without hope is a torment ('I do not have a dream'), the sort of torment usually reserved for the afterlife, for situations marked *no exit*, and even then only for the unrepentant and unredeemed dead. Who ever heard of such a platform? What could it mean other than: *Vote for me and defer the dreams and their dreamers once again. I am the white and true heir of the past. And the past will not be denied.* That was Senator Clinton's plea in New Hampshire. And she won in New Hampshire against all predictions. I hope that I am wrong. Perhaps Senator Clinton lost something more important than the New Hampshire Primary that she was deemed to have won.

Hope, however, is the last thing left in the box:  
 Only Hope was left within her unbreakable house,  
 she remained under the lip of the jar, and did not  
 fly away. Before she could, Pandora replaced the  
 lid of the jar.<sup>18</sup>

Senator Clinton's *no exit* message may have fallen on receptive ears. The "undecideds." What a wonderful term, "undecided." They know not what they think, not yet; their own thoughts are, as of now, an undiscovered country. In that undiscovered country, suspended in the thrill of an unmade choice, the undecided listen and they listen and they listen until the end that is not quite yet. They hear everything, of course. In the unconscious, nothing is forgotten, nothing is lost. A woman's tears. A man's anger. A dark figure rising.

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<sup>18</sup> HESIOD, *WORKS AND DAYS*. Lines 94-96. Myths are for retelling. In my retelling, Hope is humanity's resource against the force of circumstances.

In the strange space of the voting booth, as with sleep, as with the undiscovered country, every postcard is delivered. Senator Clinton's *no exit* postcard was delivered to the undecided of New Hampshire but the message may not work everywhere. And I could be completely wrong. I hope that I am wrong. Indeed, the "undecided" are an unstable breed and if they have one need it is to be mysterious, lovely, dark and deep. They are, perhaps, seen most clearly as trees walking, as promises of both disaster<sup>19</sup> and restored vision.<sup>20</sup>

The dark space of the unconscious is a closet. There is a correlation between two relationships that is worthy of further investigation. There is a relationship between the discourse of "the closet" and psychoanalytic understandings of the unconscious. There is also a relationship between narratives of "coming out" and psychoanalytic reports of working-through. The line of flight of this text is itself a way to address the relationship between the closet/unconscious and coming out/working-through.

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<sup>19</sup> In Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5, there is a moment in which the trees are seen to move and Macbeth knows he is undone,

I pull in resolution and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth, "Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane," and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!  
If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is no flying hence nor tarrying here.  
I gin to be awary of the sun,  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.  
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! Come, wrack!  
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

Vision can come too late, as with Macbeth's understanding of the prophesy.

<sup>20</sup> In the book of Mark, there is a moment in which the messiah of that gospel restores vision, "And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. Mark 8:23-24 KV. The moment before vision is the space of the undecided, the space in which we see people "as trees, walking" is also a promise that we will see clearly, and soon, and that our vision is not a matter of sight, but a matter of insight.

It is also a way to signal that it might be worthwhile to one day continue flying along this line.

We usually remain in the dark about the legion of desires by which we are animated. Many of our dark spaces are, paradoxically perhaps, shared spaces. Some of us are more self-conscious than others about navigating the dark spaces or provinces of the undiscovered country. Take these three elements: a white woman's tears, a white man's anger and a black body that seems somehow out of place. What do these elements mean in combination? What do these elements motivate people to do? How are these elements lived? Answers to these questions are not likely to be found on the sunny side of the street. These are twilight questions and the answers are whispered in closets. From a whisper to a scream, one unconscious speaks to another and another and it goes on in a never-ending daisy chain of remembered-yet-unremembered desires and freedoms. How many people in a lynch mob know what they are doing or why they are in the flow, what the mutilation means or why they are thrilled by the whole scene, what notes are struck by the screams and shrieks and cries of the mutilated or why they brought their white children to see the burning, why they smile for photographs with the charred remains or how the strange fruits of such family affairs relate to each person's place in the grand scheme of capitalist power? These things happen in the dark.

There has never been a night as dark as one. On February 15, 2003 we said *no* to war in unnumbered languages and in a thousand cities and in innumerable other places.<sup>21</sup> The majority of the speakers of every language of the earth said *no* to war. Were we thirty million? Were we more? Whatever the number, we were more – millions more – than ever before in the history of our world, all saying *no* to the Empire. Perhaps all roads lead to

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<sup>21</sup> *Millions Join Global Anti-War Protests*, BBC News Online, Feb. 17, 2003, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2765215.stm> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

Rome; no matter, we were three million marching there against war. We were two million in London. We were millions more in New York and in Los Angeles. We were close to wherever you are now as you read these words. It seemed to be the beginning of a new International. We held a commune in our heart.

Some people are adept at moving in the dark.<sup>22</sup> Adepts may not even know that they are adepts – maybe that is the case with Senator Clinton. Why might one wonder about the case of Senator Clinton? Because in every white childhood these elements, like a periodic table, are taught. The teaching may not have been out loud. The teacher and the pupils may have been dreaming the entire seminar; nevertheless, the lessons are learned. The voting booth is a closet. When Senator Clinton cries, when President Clinton decries “a fairy tale,” when the black-on-the-way-up is depicted as out-of-place, then all those lessons, all those “memories that smell like gasoline,” to borrow a line from the late David Wojnarowicz, are ignited – and in the voting booth, repeated.<sup>23</sup>

Every line – the colorline, for example – is a cut, and not just one but many, and not all at once but repeatedly. This is because it takes many cuts to divide the common flesh we are all in, and all the cutting has to be done over and over and from the beginning, lest the separation heal. Gloria Steinem’s postcard from the edge brought us close to the knives again. Steinem’s essay was racist and sexist. It was also old and tired and lacking in hope or beauty or decency. *What if Senator Obama were a black woman?* asks Steinem on the pages of the New York Times, “Be honest. . . do you believe that [a black woman] could be a viable candidate to head the most powerful nation on earth?”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Paul Farley, *Cassiopeia*, 9 CARDOZO WOMEN’S L.J. 423 (2003) (*To Do Feminist Legal Theory: Symposium*).

<sup>23</sup> David Wojnarowicz, MEMORIES THAT SMELL LIKE GASOLINE 15 (Art-space Books 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Gloria Steinem, *Women are Never Front-Runners*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 8, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/opinion/08steinem.html?scp=3&sq=gloria+steinem&st=nyt> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

Steinem cannot imagine it. She is a creature of the past and all its impossibilities. From the vantage point of an old and terrible era, ours, she cannot see that Senator Obama's supporters – especially the young ones – seem quite able and ready to vote for any constellation of race and gender and sexuality that might speak of hope in the same beautiful terms that Obama has chosen. Steinem, trapped inside of yesterday, thinks that it is yesterday and that everyone, *a priori*, answers her hypothetical her way. After arguing that sexism trumps racism (a tired and useless question if ever there was one, racism v. sexism, sexism v. racism, pointless and endlessly enervating mismeasurements), she endorses Senator Hillary Clinton. That is Steinem's failure of imagination. It is tragic. Between Iowa and New Hampshire, we were all beginning to think that the answer to Steinem's hypothetical, for a lot of us, was "yes." Yes, we can. Yes, we can imagine electing a gifted and inspiring candidate of whatever race or gender, and Senator Barack Obama, the singularity, is that candidate – the one Senator Hillary Clinton might have been had she remained the antiracist we thought she was when this season began.

Senator Clinton said, "It is Dr. King's birthday. The three of us are here tonight because Martin Luther King's dream has been achieved."<sup>25</sup> MLK's dream "has been achieved?" *Achieved?* Achieved. Past tense? Past tense. So this is the end of history? Senator Clinton declares the situation we are now in to be the Promised Land. This is as good as it gets?

When I was a small child I often fell asleep on long trips with my family. On waking within the soft sheets of my bed, my head still filled with the sights and sounds of the circus or the zoo or

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<sup>25</sup> Sarah Wheaton, *Clinton's Civil Rights Lesson*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 7, 2008, available at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/07/civilrights/> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008). See also Major Garrett, *Clinton's Candid Assessment*, FoxNews.com (news clip), Jan. 7, 2008, available at <http://bourbonroom.blogs.foxnews.com/2008/01/07/clintons-candid-assessment/> (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

the museum or whatever place of wonder years' excitement had been before my eyes as they began to close, perhaps on the shoulders of my father or in the arms of my mother, I would, for some time out of time in some place out of place, attempt to sort out how exactly *now* had come to separate from *then*, and how, in some strangely parallel way, *here* had drifted away from *there*. The memory of my awakenings in the impossible time-and-place between now-and-then-and-here-and-there came back to me when I first read Proust. And it unfolds with every visit to *Swann's Way*: Now Senator Clinton's racism has illuminated those same memories of things past.

When did we "achieve" Dr. King's dream? When did we as a people get to the Promised Land? The last thing I remember was MLK coming out against the war in 1967. No, that is not it. The last thing I remember was MLK being assassinated, April 4, 1968, a year to the day after he came out against the war being waged by LBJ. No, that is not it either. I remember war and rumors of war. War against the people of Iraq and rumors of war against the people of Iran; those are the last things that I remember. Now we are told that this is the end of history and that MLK's dream has been achieved. Listening to Senator Clinton, it seemed as if I must have been asleep in the car when the dream was achieved. Did my mother or my father carry me upstairs to my room just before we reached the Promised Land?

Perhaps future students of political science will study the Kerry Healey Effect. Kerry Healey was Governor Deval Patrick's opponent in the Massachusetts Gubernatorial contest of 2006. In the spectacle paradise of the televisual field, Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey was *experience*, and challenger Deval Patrick was a *dream*. Healey was a conservative Republican white woman with experience and Patrick was a liberal Democratic black man with a dream and a story.

Deval Patrick, derided as a dreamer (black), won on a positive “together we can”<sup>26</sup> campaign. The Healey Effect made it possible. As things looked more and more bleak, Healey, who had been Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts during the Romney administration, tried to rally voters based on whiteness and failed, miserably. Healey ran an advertisement on a my-opponent-who-happens-to-be-black-is-soft-on-crime-which-also-happens-to-be-black theme.<sup>27</sup> The advertisement placed the viewer in the high-heels of a woman walking alone through a parking garage at night, late at night, shadowed by a shadowy dark figure. There may have been footsteps. The universal interpretation: *I am a white woman. Vote for me or vote for Willie Horton, the universal black criminal lurking in and threatening to emerge from the shadows of the eternal parking garage of our forbidden thoughts.* Massachusetts had seen the presidential ambitions of its former favorite son, former Governor Michael Dukakis, fatally wounded by President Bush’s Willie Horton advertisement years earlier, so when the once-fearsome specter of Willie Horton returned, the Commonwealth reacted only with loathing. Healey’s chances ended with the advertisement. Patrick streamlined his message: “Together we can.” All seemed to feel good voting for Patrick. Indeed, some even said that they felt a sense of absolution, of forgiveness, of redemption for the anti-busing sins of 1970s Boston, and hope.<sup>28</sup>

There are no accidents. Clinton’s performance mirrored Healey’s. Recall the line in *The Great Gatsby* about Daisy Buchanan’s beautiful white girlhood: “‘Is she from New York? I

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Kriesberg, *Creating Communities*, The Boston Globe, Dec. 14, 2006, available at [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2006/12/14/creating\\_communities/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2006/12/14/creating_communities/) (last visited Apr. 15, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Steve LeBlanc, *New Healey Ad Links Patrick Record to Women’s Fears of Rape*, Boston Globe, Oct. 18, 2006, available at [http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/10/18/new\\_healey\\_ad\\_links\\_patrick\\_record\\_to\\_womens\\_fears\\_of\\_rape/?rss\\_id=Boston.com+---+Massachusetts+news](http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/10/18/new_healey_ad_links_patrick_record_to_womens_fears_of_rape/?rss_id=Boston.com+---+Massachusetts+news) (last visited Apr. 14, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> White Boston erupted in violent opposition to school desegregation.

asked quickly. 'From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white. . .'"<sup>29</sup> Somewhere in each person's beautiful white girlhood or boyhood – Healey's, Clinton's, anyone within white skin – the lesson of the colorline is taught. People decide what they will do with the power such knowledge gives them. Healey made the wrong call about whether to use whiteness in Massachusetts and that closed the door on her political aspirations. Perhaps Senator Clinton should not have left Hope in the box.

Obama, like Patrick, seemed to remain positive: "Yes, we can." And a lot of people were put off by the Clintons' use of race in New Hampshire, perhaps this is what brought John Kerry out to South Carolina. Confronted by his opponent's version of Willie Horton, Patrick continued to say *Together we can!* So many voters were outraged over Healey's use of just the sort of racism that Patrick's compelling and improbable story and winning manner and Ivy League diction had invited them to get past, that the inspiring black candidate with the pleasant style won with huge numbers and by a wide margin. Patrick was facing the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial<sup>30</sup> when he gave his Gubernatorial Address in 2006. He was sworn in on the Mendi Bible, the one given to John Quincy Adams by the freed slaves of the Amistad.

The strange colorlined revelations of this season are not limited to the space between those marked as black and those marked as white; they are more profound. The contest between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton is like Kenneth Clark's doll study.<sup>31</sup> *Which doll do you think would make a better president?* Kenneth Clark knew Malcolm X. They respected each other, as

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<sup>29</sup> F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, *THE GREAT GATSBY* 23–24 (Simon & Schuster Inc. 1995) (1925).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Gould Shaw, a white man, was a Union colonel in the Civil War who commanded the all-black 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

<sup>31</sup> *Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kan.*, 347 U.S. 483, 495 (1954).



I read them. Senator Obama is somewhere between Kenneth Clark and Malcolm X, like most black people. Clark and Malcolm both understood the force of history in that doll study. Malcolm once put it another way, *Is the white man's ice colder?* That was the question that Malcolm forced everyone to confront. That is the question that this moment in history placed before black voters.

It is a strange force that carries us toward the white doll or the black doll. It is a strange force that manifests itself as the cooler coolness of ice on this or that side of the colorline. The strangeness has to do with whatever it is that history has made of us. When we see that strange force of history in our so-called reasons and so-called rational choices, it is uncanny. Uncanny because we have seen it before. Uncanny because the object in the mirror is closer than it appears. Uncanny because we may not have been aware that we were looking in the mirror. Uncanny because we thought that we were simply choosing candidates. Uncanny because we think that we are free to choose and we are – but we are also moved by forces we dimly perceive, if at all. Uncanny because our choices are all wrapped up in how we chose to deal with whatever it is that our history has done to us.

The colorline twists and turns around hearts and minds in truly damaging ways. The truth of that damage, the painful and personal truth about it, is what a lot of black voters will have to confront when they confront themselves in the voting booth: *Is the white candidate's ice colder than the black candidate's ice?*

The Kerry Healey Effect may have been triggered by Senator Clinton's strange transit from RFK-and-JFK to MLK-and-LBJ. After Iowa, people all around the nation were comparing Senator Barack Obama to RFK and to JFK. Camelot began to appear on the horizon of our national dream—we were spellbound. *They said that this day would never come.* Yes, we were spellbound. Senator Clinton had to do something, anything, now. Senator Clinton put poetry in its place by marking MLK as a *mere* poet and LBJ as a *potent* president. Poetry, how-

ever, will not stay in its place. Poetry is not a luxury – we learned that from Audre Lorde.<sup>32</sup> Senator Obama responded: *Don't tell me words don't matter!* He learned that from Governor Deval Patrick.

1967 was the summer of love. Even the Supreme Court seemed to say, “goodbye to all that” with *Loving v. Virginia*.<sup>33</sup> Amidst all of the changes, however, love and rage remained true to each other and a pair of beating hearts, alone, cannot make a happy home. One hundred years after the ratification of the 14th Amendment, 1968, we witnessed the Fair Housing Act.<sup>34</sup> Oral arguments were heard on April 1st and April 2nd regarding whether the 13th Amendment extended congressional power into the realm of purely private transactions, *Jones v. Alfred Mayer Co.*<sup>35</sup> The following day, April 3rd – the first anniversary of his open opposition to the war – Martin Luther King predicted his assassination, telling an audience of Memphis garbage workers that he, not we, had been to the Mountaintop, but we, not he, would get to the Promised Land. On April 4th, Martin Luther King was assassinated. Some two hundred U.S. cities were set ablaze. 1968 was the year of the panther.

Listen to the dream as the past and the future refuse their allotted places: *I have been to the Mountaintop*. Past tense. *I have seen the Promised Land*. Past tense. *Longevity has its place*. Militarism, capitalism and racism will tomorrow attempt to put MLK in his place. The undiscovered country. No exit. Everything in the past tense. *I may not get there with you*. Once again, back to the past tense. *But we as a people will get to the Promised Land*. Future tense. From the Mountaintop, you can see the Promised Land. MLK did lead us to the Mountaintop. King

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<sup>32</sup> AUDRE LORDE, *Poetry is Not a Luxury*, in *SISTER OUTSIDER: ESSAYS AND SPEECHES* 36-39 (1984) (“Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.”).

<sup>33</sup> 388 U.S. 1 (1967).

<sup>34</sup> 42 U.S.C. §3601 (2008).

<sup>35</sup> 392 U.S. 409 (1968).

came out against militarism, capitalism and racism when he denounced the U.S. war on the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. MLK did this knowing that militarism, capitalism and racism would kill him for speaking the truth about the Promised Land – the truth that the Kingdom is the end of militarism, capitalism and racism. Ending militarism, capitalism and racism is the Kingdom. MLK could see this from the mountaintop, a place he climbed only by putting longevity in its place. The key to the Kingdom was King's placement of longevity in its place.

*Key to the Kingdom*, not *keys*. Singular. Militarism, capitalism and racism are one. That is how the Trinity appears from the Mountaintop. That is the lesson MLK was killed for teaching. When we cease to bow down before the Trinity of militarism, capitalism and racism, we will *be* the Promised Land. Now let us return to the beginning. Let us return to the place where we can see, again, the difference between MLK and LBJ:

As West and East

In all flat Mapps – and I am one – are on,  
So death doth touch the Resurrection<sup>36</sup>

That may not make a Trinity, so on to another sonnet:

Batter my heart, three person'd God;—<sup>37</sup>

MLK and LBJ find difference in the Trinity. War and Capitalism and Racism are a god in three moments. War is the difference between the two terms, MLK and LBJ, and it is that difference, War, that Senator Clinton embraced on October 11, 2002 when she voted in favor of the Iraq War Resolution, also known as the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq, to give President Bush the power to wage war against the peoples of Iraq.

Trinity was born on July 16, 1945. It was the birth of the Atomic Age. Robert Oppenheimer saw the spirit of the age, *I*

<sup>36</sup> *Hymn to God, My God, In My Sickness*, John Donne.

<sup>37</sup> *Holy Sonnet XIV*, John Donne.

*am become death, the destroyer of worlds.* It was Oppenheimer who quoted the two sonnets above as his reasons for calling the first nuclear bomb Trinity.

Preemptive nuclear war is the end of human future. It is also part of the Bush II Doctrine. There has never been a night as dark as this one. Some of us are in love with the dark. The rest of us must learn to “love one another or die.”<sup>38</sup>

Only the blacks understood the evils of President Bush in 2000, and again in 2004. Some ninety-five percent of the black electorate voted against Bush in 2000, and again in 2004, and – lest we forget, without the criminal disenfranchisement of thousands of blacks in 2000 and again in 2004 – Bush would never have become President and the hundred thousand girls, boys, women and men that were killed by the U.S. attack on Iraq would not be dead. Senator Clinton gave her support to Bush’s war on Iraq. It was a cowardly vote for what Arundhati Roy rightly calls “the most cowardly war in history.”<sup>39</sup>

*Starfish on the beach*, for me, is a blinding flash from the undiscovered country, by way of two countries, Australia and Mississippi. *On the Beach*, as a novel and a film, is right there alongside the struggle for freedom in Mississippi, 1963 to 1964. *On the Beach*, Stanley Kramer’s 1959 adaptation of Nevil Shute’s novel is set in 1964. The events of the original novel are set in 1963, taking the two works in sequence, 1963 to 1964. That cinematic sequence, and the 1963 to 1964 of the *Eyes on the Prize* documentary recollection of the race for the Presidential Nomination, come together *on the beach* along with what follows and in the voice of whatever revenants may come.

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<sup>38</sup> *September 1, 1939*, W. H. Auden.

<sup>39</sup> Arundhati Roy’s opening statement in Istanbul, Turkey on behalf of the jury of conscience of the world tribunal on Iraq. Arundhati Roy, *The Most Cowardly War in History*, Baltimore Chronicle, June 27, 2005 available at <http://www.baltimorechronicle.com/062705Roy.html> (last visited Apr. 15, 2008).

*On the Beach* chronicles the winding down of life after nuclear Armageddon. The bombs have fallen. The few who survived the bombs are waiting for the end, waiting for the radioactive clouds to reach them down under. There is no exit, the hard rain will fall. On screen in 1963 to 1964, airing only once, a little girl in a field, Birgitte Olsen, is counting daisy petals and singing out the numerals in a pretty voice “one, two, three, four, five, six, six, eight, nine.” Suddenly, a harsh male voice begins a louder countdown. Our eyes move in with the camera until the darkness of the little peace girl’s pupils fill our field of vision, blocking everything out. The harsh countdown ends at zero in the blinding flash of nuclear detonation. Another male voice, President Johnson’s, rings out, “These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.” A third male voice says “Vote for President Johnson on November 3. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.” A little girl, an entire world, and a field of daisies are all consumed by the destroyer of worlds. *On the Beach*, there is nothing to do but wait for the long black cloud to finally come down. The election contest of 1963 to 1964 between Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Baines Johnson was won *on the beach*, on that beach. A major battle of that campaign, however, was won on a field of daisies by the little peace girl.

Earlier, referring to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Daisy Buchanan*, not to the *Little Peace Girl* of the nuclear daisies, I said that there are lessons learned in every *beautiful white girlhood* or *boyhood*. It is in war that racism and capitalism come together. It is in racism that capitalism and war come together. It is in capitalism that war and racism come together. These links, like daisy chains, seem fragile and insubstantial but that is because our lives are so fragile and insubstantial in comparison to the destroyer of worlds. MLK was able to see this Trinity from the Mountaintop only by putting longevity in its place. MLK’s broken silence was also his break with LBJ.

From 1963 to 1964, LBJ was the peace candidate and Goldwater was the war candidate; so it appeared. In 1964, Senator Clinton, then a teenager, was a Goldwater Republican. By 1968, LBJ was the candidate of war and MLK showed this in his broken silence. Forty years of experience after 1968, after the Iowa Caucuses, Senator Clinton, on hearing too many discussions of Senator Barack Obama's candidacy as the promise of a New Camelot, decided to eclipse the RFK and JFK comparisons through a different comparison, to MLK. Senator Clinton, racializing her opponent as MLK and eclipsing the RFK and JFK comparisons that were being made, then described the civil rights movement as having been more the product of LBJ's potency than of MLK's poetry. Reading Senator Clinton symptomatically, she was for Goldwater when he was the war candidate and she was for LBJ when he was the war candidate and she voted with Bush II when he went to war in Iraq and she has not ruled out war with Iran.

There is talk of RFK and JFK, but the role that President Obama seems destined to play in the New Camelot is the one played by James Baldwin, with one important change. When Baldwin was in vogue, he brought news to the White House that Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy did not know that he did not know.<sup>40</sup> I might illustrate my point about Obama by writing like Baldwin: *We all know, at some level too frightening to acknowledge during the day's excesses, that there is a price to be paid for those excesses. We also know that our not knowing is a refusal to know, and we also know that this refusal, our refusal, our refusal to know – let alone pay – the price of the ticket, is the most costly excess of all. And now it is minutes before midnight, or minutes after. Now it may be too late or too soon, it may be*

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<sup>40</sup> In 1963, James Baldwin arranged a meeting between Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and a variety of black artists and activists to inform the Attorney General about white tyranny and the black revolution just around the corner. The Attorney General later complained that Baldwin and his associates were unnecessarily hostile and confrontational.

*minutes after or minutes before another child is murdered in Iraq, and it doesn't really matter whether that just-murdered or just-about-to-be-murdered child is on this side or that side of Bush II's with-us-or-against-us divide. What does matter – and it matters with what Martin called the fierce urgency of now is that we look into that live-or-dead child of god's eyes, really look, really look at the price we have not paid and at what that not paying has made of us. What it has cost us is what we have become: we have become monsters, we have become death, we have become the destroyer of worlds. We are condemned and we have condemned ourselves. But maybe, if there are a few moments before midnight, and I am not saying that there are – it may already be too late – Trinity has already happened, but if it is not too late, if there are a few moments before midnight, then maybe there is something we can all do to turn it around and change. We have to try. We have to try. Trying is all we can do and it is the hardest thing to do but if we can do it, just try, then that means that we can change, and if we can change ourselves then we can change everything; not without struggle or cost but knowing the struggle and the cost. That is how I might write were I James Baldwin, but I am not Baldwin, except in the sense that we all are channeling Baldwin under the force of current circumstances.*

The Bush II regime has been seven years of night. Bush II's darkness opened a space for a lot of arguments and people. Even, or especially, a James Baldwin might be very successful, had he lived now, at winning hearts and minds and votes. After Bush II, anything is possible. If there is an "after Bush II" then anything is possible. Bush II's crimes were in our name. This nation is like Faust near midnight but without the security of knowing the price soon to be paid. Now it is time, maybe the last time, to listen to the better angels of our nature. That, at any rate, seems to be the national mood.

Perhaps we have felt this way for a long time. Slavery is death. Enslavement is a shock. The slave sometimes thinks she has escaped death. She has not. No one escapes slavery. We run.

Every race ends where it started. Escape seems forever to elude us. Who are we? We are the fragments of the original accumulation. We are the decomposition of that which was destroyed by slavery. Our enslavement was the wealth from which this republic emerged. This republic is the sovereignty of our unremembered death. Perhaps, somewhere beneath the joy and fun and seasons in the sun, we have felt this truth for a long time. We remember the shock of the death we died in the mode of repetition. The fragments reassemble in the direction of the original trauma. The Middle Passage never ends.

One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, we were not free. In the 1963 to 1964 election cycle, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) attempted to establish democracy. Mississippi NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers was murdered on June 12, 1963. Mississippi blacks were denied the vote in the Democratic Primary that June. The fragments of the original accumulation, attempting to take conscious hold of history, organized a "Freedom Ballot" to take place that November. Thousands of Mississippi blacks voted in the open election. The creation of the MFDP was the major project of Freedom Summer 1964. The MFDP was betrayed. The National Democratic Party betrayed the integrated and democratic Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in favor of the whites-only Mississippi Democratic Party.

LBJ, Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale represented the betrayal of the blacks as a compromise. Under the terms of the compromise, the National Democratic Party offered the MFDP two at-large seats. The compromise would have allowed two MFDP members to view but not vote in the floor proceedings of the convention. Furthermore, the compromise would have allowed the whites-only Mississippi Democratic Party members to keep their seats and keep their votes. The MFDP rejected the compromise. Sharecropper and MFDP leader Fannie Lou



Hamer declared, “We didn’t come all this way for no two seats, ‘cause all of us is tired.”<sup>41</sup>

*On the beach*, it is too late. *On the beach*, the bombs have all exploded. *On the beach*, there is nothing to do but wait for the radiation to complete what our own love of death had already started. *On the beach*, our lives are meaningless because mass death has made life itself meaningless. *On the beach*, the lights have already gone out. *On the beach*, it is too late.

The war on Iraq is a repetition of our own original trauma. What we refuse to confront within us becomes us. Death becomes us and we become destroyers of worlds. Now we are at

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<sup>41</sup> Mississippi NAACP President and MFDP member Aaron Henry elaborated:

Now, Lyndon made the typical white man’s mistake: Not only did he say, ‘You’ve got two votes,’ which was too little, but he told us to whom the two votes would go. He’d give me one and Ed King one; that would satisfy. But, you see, he didn’t realize that 64 of us came up from Mississippi on a Greyhound bus, eating cheese and crackers and bologna all the way there; we didn’t have no money. Suffering the same way. We got to Atlantic City; we put up in a little hotel, three or four of us in a bed, four or five of us on the floor. You know, we suffered a common kind of experience, the whole thing. But now, what kind of fool am I, or what kind of fool would Ed have been, to accept gratuities for ourselves? You say, Ed and Aaron can get in but the other 62 can’t. This is typical white man picking black folks’ leaders, and that day is just gone.

The conscious section of the black proletariat moved on from *freedom now* to *black power*, from *civil rights* to the *commune*. John Lewis observed:

As far as I’m concerned, this was the turning point of the civil rights movement. I’m absolutely convinced of that. Until then, despite every setback and disappointment and obstacle we had faced over the years, the belief still prevailed that the system would work, the system would listen, the system would respond. Now, for the first time, we had made our way to the very center of the system. We had played by the rules, done everything we were supposed to do, had played the game exactly as required, had arrived at the doorstep and found the door slammed in our face.

JOHN LEWIS, *WALKING WITH THE WIND* 291 (1998).

war with life itself. No war in history has ever been opposed by as many people. And the war happened anyway. We have to bring the war to an end. And that means that we can. To bring the war to an end, we will have to face up to the death we have been running from and the death that we have become.<sup>42</sup>

The war on Iraq is part of a wider and wilder and more terrible war against the world's fragile and historically quite recent experiments in democracy. No war in history has ever been opposed by as many people. And the war happened anyway.

Senator Clinton helped to make war on Iraq. Every single one of us knew that the vote to authorize the war meant war. Senator Clinton also knew. She says she was misled. She was not misled. She voted for war. And now she asks to be trusted to bring the war to an end. Senator Clinton's post-Iowa racism is no Jericho road. MLK, in his last speech, said: "The Jericho road is a dangerous road. . . The question is not: if I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me? The question is: if I don't stop to help the sanitation workers [in Memphis], what will happen to them?"<sup>43</sup> The next day King was assassinated. Senator Clinton's vote for the most cowardly war in history, the U.S. war on the people of Iraq, is no walk down Jericho road. Senator

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<sup>42</sup> The ever-changing reasons for the war have nothing to do with anything other than our refusal to deal with, let alone work-through, the event of mass death, the Middle Passage, that was our national beginning. Our refusals are ideologies. Walter Davis writes, "*Ideology is the wedding of everything to the eroticization of Thanatos*. That eroticization is the through-line of recent American history, the key to understanding the true goal of capitalist ideology: to create a historical situation in which all human relations have become relations among things." WALTER A. DAVIS, *DEATH'S DREAM KINGDOM* 20 (Pluto Press 2006). Davis goes on to share Robert Lowell's identification of global war as our "monotonous sublime;" "Monotonous because it's the repetition compulsion of those unable to react to history any other way. Sublime because it evacuates all inner anxiety by creating the only object that can fill such beings with wonder: the scorched earths in which they realize the objective correlative of their own inner condition." *Id.* at 20.

<sup>43</sup> From the last speech Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made before he was assassinated, while King was working on a campaign to help black sanitation workers who were striking for the right to unionize.

Obama said “no” to war and Senator Clinton said “yes” to war. Our orientation to the war on Iraq is the important marker of future identity. The war on Iraq prefigures the shape of our future struggle against war and racism and capitalism. And gender? Where is gender now? It is through war that the Trinity takes the form of the masculine. Those whose bodies the Trinity blankets with its bombs are thereby taken up by the form of the feminine. War is the gender of the Trinity and its ecstasy:

But who can live for long  
 In an euphoric dream;  
 Out of the mirror they stare,  
 Imperialism’s face  
 And the International wrong.<sup>44</sup>

Our joy, our fun, our seasons in the sun pass by quickly, too quickly, and then cease.

Only *on the beach* do we discover what it was all about. And then it is too late. But we can bring all this death to an end. James Baldwin, writing in order to honor Medgar Evers, wrote:

[O]ne must say Yes . . . to life, and embrace it wherever it is found—and it is found in terrible places. . . For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *September 1, 1939*, W.H. Auden.

<sup>45</sup> JAMES BALDWIN (text) and RICHARD AVEDON (photographs), *NOTHING PERSONAL* (Atheneum Publishers 1964).

Militarism, capitalism and racism are a Trinity. If we do not end the other two, we will not end the one. Which one? The one that says *no* to life. Which one? The one that is the destroyer of worlds. Which one? Each one is all three. Trinity's eternal Middle Passage will end when we turn our backs on all its altars – militarism, capitalism, racism – by saying *yes* to life.

