

The People v. Luigi Mangione

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THE PEOPLE V. LUIGI MANGIONE

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Preface:

Who Cares?

Most books about famous criminal cases pick a side. They either lionize the accused or condemn them. They simplify. This book does neither, and that refusal is what makes it worth reading.

When Luigi Mangione was arrested in December 2024 for the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, he became an instant symbol. To some, he was a folk hero who had struck back against a system that lets people die for profit. To others, he was a terrorist who murdered a father of two on a Manhattan sidewalk. Social media did what social media does: it flattened a complicated human being into content, into merchandise, into takes. What got lost was everything that matters.

Jeff Hood and Alli Sullivan bring unusual credentials to this case. Hood has served as a spiritual advisor to death row inmates across five states and has witnessed eleven executions. He knows what it looks like when the government kills someone. Sullivan has spent years navigating the American healthcare system as a chronically ill person, subject to the whims of insurance companies and their algorithms. Between them, they understand both sides of the violence this case has exposed: the violence of the individual and the violence of the system.

The essays collected here argue that these two forms of violence cannot be separated. The bullet that killed Brian Thompson and the denial letters that have killed countless anonymous Americans are part of the same problem. Hood and Sullivan refuse to celebrate either. They condemn the shooting.

They also condemn the pursuit of the death penalty against Mangione, viewing it as political theater rather than justice. And they condemn the healthcare industry that creates the desperation from which such acts emerge.

This position will frustrate readers looking for easy answers. Those who have made Mangione into a revolutionary saint will find no support here for the idea that killing a CEO constitutes meaningful political action. Those who want him executed will find a detailed argument for why state killing solves nothing and perpetuates the cycle of violence. The authors are equal-opportunity disappointers, and that is precisely what this moment requires.

One of the most striking essays examines Mangione's intellectual influences, his engagement with Krishnamurti and liberation theology, his apparent belief that he had seen through society's illusions to some unbearable truth. Hood and Sullivan treat this seriously without endorsing it. They recognize that Mangione's reported writings reveal a young man grappling with real moral questions about injustice and complicity. They also recognize that his alleged answer to those questions was catastrophically wrong. Understanding is not the same as excusing.

The book is particularly sharp on the failures of the Luigi Mangione fandom. Hood and Sullivan document how online supporters have turned a capital case into entertainment, treating the possibility of execution as background noise to their meme-making. They argue, convincingly, that this performative support actually harms Mangione's chances. Every post celebrating the killing of Thompson makes it easier for prosecutors to paint him as a dangerous ideologue who must be

eliminated. The fandom is not saving him. It may be helping to kill him.

Attorney General Pam Bondi's decision to seek the death penalty receives extended criticism. The announcement came before indictment, delivered via social media graphic, with no opportunity for defense counsel to present mitigating evidence. Hood and Sullivan see this as emblematic of how capital punishment actually functions in America, not as a careful weighing of the worst offenses, but as a political tool wielded against whoever serves the interests of those in power. Mangione, despite his lack of prior criminal record, became useful to an administration eager to demonstrate its commitment to executions.

The practical policy proposals in these pages deserve attention. The authors call for mandatory disclosure of insurance denial rates, independent medical review boards, criminal liability for executives whose companies make fraudulent denials resulting in death, and bans on AI-driven claim rejections without physician review. These are concrete reforms that would address the systemic violence the case has highlighted. They offer an alternative to both vigilantism and theatrical prosecution.

What emerges from this collection is an argument that America faces a choice. It can execute Luigi Mangione while leaving the healthcare system unchanged, sending a clear message about whose lives matter and whose violence counts. Or it can use this moment to pursue real accountability, for Mangione through imprisonment, for the insurance industry through reform. The first option satisfies the desire for spectacle. The second might actually reduce suffering.

Hood and Sullivan do not pretend to have all the answers. They acknowledge the difficulty of their position, the way it satisfies no one fully, the discomfort of refusing to join either team. But they insist that this discomfort is necessary. The Mangione case has revealed something broken at the center of American life. Fixing it will require more than a verdict. It will require the kind of sustained moral attention these essays model.

The trial will proceed. The fandom will continue generating content. The insurance companies will continue denying claims. Somewhere in federal detention, a human being awaits a decision about whether he will live or die. This book asks readers to hold all of that at once, without flinching, without simplifying, without looking away. It is an uncomfortable read. It should be.

Chapter 1

Luigi Mangione Illustrates Everything Wrong with the Death Penalty

Alli Sullivan

An earlier version of this piece was produced with The Luigi Case Files to mark World Day Against the Death Penalty. 2025's theme—"the death penalty protects no one"—which certainly rings true in the case of Luigi Mangione.

When Attorney General Pam Bondi pledged on her first day in office to "revive the federal death penalty," it didn't surprise any one of us that has been privy to the state of the death penalty in recent years. Afterall, she was no stranger to pursuing the punishment in her home state of Florida during her tenure as Florida's Attorney General and in order to serve as one of Donald Trump's personal attorneys during his first impeachment trial, I have no doubt that she possessed many of the same qualities as her maniacal boss—namely his lust for blood—making her the perfect candidate to carry out Trump's revenge-fueled agenda in this second go around.

Within weeks of assuming her role as US Attorney General, she set her sights on one man. Luigi Mangione—a young man with no prior criminal record, no history of violence, and an extraordinary academic profile. He became the test case to promote the political aspirations of a woman who announced her intent to seek death via a Canva graphic.

How did Luigi end up here? In December 2024, Luigi was accused of killing UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in

Manhattan. Held in federal detention for almost a year, he now faces overlapping state and federal prosecutions that include charges of murder with a firearm and interstate stalking. Luigi's case bears none of the hallmarks one might expect from someone facing this nation's harshest punishment—reminding the public that their skewed perceptions of capital punishment don't even begin to reflect the reality of it. For decades this country has been grappling with the issue of arbitrariness with its application—that it is not the "worst of the worst" that get sent to death row, but it is the people whom government officials can make an example out of and whose cases they can use to re-legitimize the system of capital punishment in the eyes of the public. In the 1970s the US Supreme Court, in the case called *Furman v. Georgia*, shot down all death penalty schemes in the US and forced states that wanted to have the death penalty to rewrite their laws. Four years and four days later, the 'July 2nd Cases'—of which *Gregg v. Georgia* is the most well-known—upheld these new schemes. Not only is the death penalty not becoming less arbitrary, many would argue it is becoming worse—particularly as courts are refusing to listen to the merits of one's case, hiding behind procedural bars—even in cases of innocence. Donald Trump's stacked US Supreme Court ruled in a 2022 decision that, among other things, innocence was not enough to stop an execution if it can be demonstrated on paper that the defendant received "due process".

This case lays bare everything that is broken about the federal death penalty. When Pam Bondi ordered her prosecutors to seek the death penalty, Luigi had not even been indicted—let alone presented with the opportunity to push back on the claims made by the federal government. Instead, defense counsel learned the

government sought to pursue death for Luigi from a reporter. It is more than likely Luigi and his family found out the same thing from the news, alongside the rest of the world.

More than that, Luigi's defense was denied any meaningful opportunity to present mitigating evidence before a grand jury, potentially swayed by comments from the Attorney General, met and subsequently reached an indictment. That is the problem with how grand jury proceedings are conducted in the US—they're one-sided by design. And despite numerous requests, the defense was also denied a meeting with the Justice Department's death penalty review committee, a key step that normally ensures full consideration before a death sentence is pursued.

Addressing this in their September 20, 2025 motion to preclude the death penalty, Luigi's defense team wrote "the Mangione case presented an opportunity for the new Administration to demonstrate its loathing of the prior administration, and to publicly advance its new and aggressive death penalty agenda through one of the most watched criminal cases in decades."

Translation: The Government showed zero regard for the person whose life it planned to take. As has been glaringly obvious with this administration, they turned what should be the most serious of all considerations into an absolute spectacle. Though Luigi's is a uniquely high-profile and prejudiced case, this brutal and cynical approach to the death penalty is far too common in all the jurisdictions which continue to stand by it.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees every American fairness, equality, and freedom from cruel and unusual punishment. The death penalty violates these fundamental promises. As Albert

Camus so powerfully reminds us of the inherent cruelty in this system:

"But what then is capital punishment but the most premeditated of murders, to which no criminal's deed, however calculated it may be, can be compared? For there to be equivalence, the death penalty would have to punish a criminal who had warned his victim of the date at which he would inflict a horrible death on him and who, from that moment onward, had confined him at his mercy for months. Such a monster is not encountered in private life."

As a system that originates back when lynchings were a regular occurrence here, the modern death penalty took shape when the US was losing its moral highground on the world stage. We didn't stop the killings—we just carried them out behind closed doors, shrouded in secrecy, and under the guise of racial neutrality. In this country, prosecutors wield the unilateral discretionary power to decide when to seek the death penalty. There is nothing equal or fair about a system that categorically targets poor folks, those on the periphery of society, people of color, and those who have intellectual disabilities, brain damage, or serious mental illness. A substantial portion of the folks who end up on death row are survivors of unspeakable abuse, many at state-run institutions.

Though Luigi may not fit many of these descriptions, the government will always use the opportunities handed to them to advance their political agendas. That much is abundantly clear here.

The federal government's intent to seek the death penalty for Luigi displays a concerning pattern endemic to the institution of capital punishment since its inception—the system values the

lives of certain victims more than others. Luigi is being charged with killing a SINGLE individual who was the CEO of a ruthless health insurance company. In other cases, such as the El Paso Walmart shooting, the killer was appropriately sentenced without the death penalty—mind you, this individual was convicted of killing a few dozen people and injuring a few dozen others in a racially motivated attack. All of the victims in the El Paso shooting's lives do not matter less than the life of Brian Thompson, but our government's treatment of these cases tells us all we need to know about whose lives they value.

But to understand what is happening now, we need to go backward.

Donald Trump has fixated on the death penalty for decades. From taking out full page ads in the New York Times calling for the execution of the Central Park Five in the 1980s (now 'The Exonerated Five') to overseeing an unprecedented execution spree in the final months of his first administration—putting to death 13 individuals with blatant disregard for their histories and the issues in their cases that deserved meaningful consideration. His reshaped US Supreme Court ensured that the rails were greased directly into the execution chamber for those 13 and the dozens of others who faced execution at the state level since then.

When Donald Trump was inaugurated for the first time Death Penalty Action's co-founders, Abe Bonowitz and Scott Langley, knew that it would only be a matter of time before Trump and his first administration would seek execution dates. They co-founded Death Penalty Action because there was no one positioned in the movement that solely focused on opposition to federal executions. Fortunately, it took them until

the last 6 months of the term to restart federal executions—including the final three barely a couple of days before President Biden took office. Trump's first administration knowingly broke policy to ensure that the executions could be carried out before the new administration would put a stop to them. Execution warrants typically are valid for a 24-hour period—though this has changed in a few states. With the federal executions scheduled for 6pm ET, it did not give them a whole lot of time to wait for the Supreme Court to release its rulings and carry out the execution before the warrant expired at midnight. In several of these cases, the rulings came down late into the night. Rather than reissuing the execution warrants for thirty days in the future, as their policy dictates, warrants were reissued in the moment and the execution was carried out shortly thereafter. Dustin Higgs faced execution January 15, 2021, just 5 days before President Biden was to be inaugurated. It was the middle of the night by the time the ruling permitting his execution to proceed came down. The federal government went through with the execution and my friend was pronounced dead at 1:23am. There was no time to reissue the warrant 30 days into the future. If they didn't succeed in killing Lisa Montgomery, Corey Johnson, and Dustin Higgs that week, they more than certainly would lose their chance. That is the disturbing length Donald Trump and his co-conspirators went to to ensure that they could kill as many people as possible.

In just 6 months, 13 people would be executed—usually in batches of 2 or 3 in a single week. If they began sooner, we would have lost far more than those 13. In its incredibly successful #StopTrumpExecutions campaign, a campaign that really began as soon as Trump left office in 2021, our team at Death Penalty

Action led the effort that resulted in President Biden commuting 37 of the 40 men who were on federal death row. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, a few individuals were left behind and remain on death row today.

Now emboldened by his second term—and out for revenge—Donald Trump is going even further. Disguised within the storm of executive orders Trump signed on his first day back in office, one of his first orders, Restoring the Death Penalty and Protecting Public Safety, called out Biden for commuting these sentences, doubled down on the dehumanizing language he used to describe the 37, ordered that the 37 individuals whose federal death sentences were commuted to be shipped off to the last remaining federal super max prison. Sometimes referred to as "Alcatraz of the Rockies", it forced them into even harsher restrictions than they already had on federal death row. This move should not have been allowed. If there were real safety concerns with any of these men, they would have already been sent to the ADX. Especially concerning about this first order is the fact that he ordered DOJ officials to work with state jurisdictions to retry and resentence these individuals to death at the state level so that they may still face execution at some point in the future—a colossal waste of taxpayer resources. A few men have already been transferred back to their state to face trial again. Trump also promised that his administration would work to ensure that the states had everything they needed to be able to carry out executions—since then we have had 47 executions—more than have been carried out in a single year in nearly two decades—with several more already scheduled for the New Year. The current individual holding the White House hostage cannot undo the

commutations, but he can reassert his power and salve his ego by sending a message—and he's using Luigi to do it.

In September, Trump signed another executive order about the death penalty announcing that his administration would seek the death penalty for murders that happen within the District of Columbia despite voters' emphatic opposition to it decades earlier. Not only is his administration blatantly violating the laws in DC, they have also been ordered to seek the death penalty up and down the country—especially in states that no longer permit the punishment.

In both executive orders, he clings onto the falsity that the death penalty is required to support public safety and deter violent crime. This is a pattern we see from elected officials who only care about their political career—they make the public believe that they are working to make society safer while doing absolutely nothing to actually prevent violent crime. The continued use of the death penalty has not only been shown to provide no meaningful deterrent effect, but we consistently see higher rates of violent crime in states that continue to stand by this archaic practice—including higher likelihoods that law enforcement will be killed in such jurisdictions. What can be shown to deter crime is the likelihood of being caught, not the brutality of the punishment.

If the federal government truly cared about public safety, they would be working for the prevention of crime, not merely responding to it after harm has already occurred. Working for the prevention of crime would necessitate robust social safety nets that can intervene in someone's life before they go on to harm others, that can provide mental health care, pull people out of poverty, and ensure that everyone has what they need

to survive. One of the most prominent predictors of crime is extreme socioeconomic stratification—and the US is ground zero for these conditions. No amount of aggressive prosecution will make us safer so long as our leaders devote more energy to bickering back and forth over semantics than they do improving the conditions of the lives of the people they serve.

The death penalty protects no one. It does not make communities safer, it does not deliver justice fairly, and it does not honor the victims it claims to.

The process of "death qualifying" a jury ends up preventing anyone who does not believe in the death penalty from participating. It results in the exclusion of people of color. As long as the prosecutors can make up any race-neutral argument, they can get away with peremptorily striking any juror they'd like. The result is juries that are usually whiter, more conservative, more likely to hold sexist or anti-LGBTQ+ views, and more likely to convict than the average group of citizens. So much for "a jury of one's peers", right?

Chapter 2

No Death Penalty for Luigi Mangione: A Spiritual Plea

Jeff Hood

I'm not a New Yorker, but I write with urgency and a heavy heart. The last person executed in New York was Eddie Lee Mays on August 15, 1963. For decades, New York has stood apart from much of the nation—rejecting the death penalty and affirming that even those who commit the gravest crimes are entitled to due process and the possibility of redemption. That principle is more than law—it's a moral compass. Today, that compass is being tested. Federal prosecutors want to make sure that New Yorkers sentence Luigi Mangione to death.

For well over a decade, I've served as a spiritual adviser to men on death rows throughout the nation. Repeatedly, I've walked the cold halls of death—where the condemned wait their turn to be taken to the chamber—listening to confessions, sharing in prayers and searching desperately for humanity in spaces where such a task seems impossible. The battle to stay human amidst the horror is real. But battle we all must. Regardless of circumstance or location, our souls depend on the fight to stay human amidst the inhumane.

On eleven different occasions, I've stood in an execution chamber and watched as the government kills someone that I care about. Each one festers. The finality is absolute. The pain is irrevocable. The moral weight of it all—it never leaves you.

I am pleading with New Yorkers—do not let federal prosecutors undermine your commitment to life. This is bigger than one man. Bigger than one case. It is about the ethical mantle you have long held in leading the fight against misplaced ideas of justice that spread the lie that killing can stop the cycle of killing.

The Mangione case is horrifying. The murder of Brian Thompson, CEO of UnitedHealthcare, shook the city. Throughout the nation, we all felt it too. And yet, despite New York having abolished the death penalty decades ago, federal prosecutors have stepped in and loudly decided to seek a death sentence.

But Mangione has not even had his day in court. He is accused. Judicial proceedings have barely begun. And already, the federal government is pushing us to assume he is guilty and start preparing the execution chamber. It's easy to look at the available evidence and assume guilt. But that's not how justice works. We do not execute people based on headlines. That's dangerous. The death penalty is irreversible. Once carried out, mistakes, biases and misjudgments can never be corrected. Presumption of innocence is sacred. Especially here. It's also important to remember that life without parole mitigates the irreversible consequences of the death penalty.

Some will say certain crimes demand execution. For years, I've lived and breathed among men who committed unspeakable acts. Life without parole protects society just as effectively. It also allows for something execution cannot—reflection and redemption. Guilt and fear consume the condemned. And in many cases, change begins to take root. That possibility ends the moment the state executes someone.

Pursuing the death penalty—in a state that has long rejected the death penalty as an option—sends the wrong message. Justice becomes something swayed by publicity, politics and by the desire for vengeance. Not by principle. Such lunacy is not becoming of New Yorkers.

Here's the harsh truth—even though New York abolished the death penalty, federal prosecutors can step in. A crime in Manhattan can become a federal crime and suddenly your moral stance is challenged. When federal prosecutors step in and seek death in a state that has abolished it, they are not just testing the law—they're testing your values. They are asking whether New York still believes what it has long stood for—that a government that can take the lives of its' citizens is a government that has grown too big.

This should alarm anyone who cares about justice, fairness and integrity. If the federal government succeeds here, it signals that New York's values are conditional. That abolition is not absolute. That your moral compass can be overridden. It also reveals that the federal government can overrule local values anywhere and everywhere else it desires. Other places throughout the nation will also face the wrath of the federal government in unexpected ways.

This is not a political argument. It is a moral one. Abolition is more than a policy—it's a reflection of commitment to life, humanity and fairness. By upholding a fierce opposition to the death penalty, you protect the integrity of the justice system and the moral fabric of society.

Mangione's case is high profile. Anger and fear are powerful. But New York's tradition has always been about resisting those impulses. Justice must not be defined by outrage, media

attention or emotion. It must be defined by principle—moral principle.

I have seen the consequences of execution firsthand—lives lost, remorse extinguished, systems compromised and families shattered. I implore New Yorkers to stand firm. Reject the federal pursuit of the death penalty in your home. Honor your tradition. Protect your values. Send a message to the nation—New York will not allow the ultimate punishment to be imposed against its will. Mangione's case is a test—and it is one New Yorkers must pass.

For if New York stays silent now, it will invite the machinery of death back in—and once it starts moving again, it rarely stops with just one body.

Chapter 3

The Yearning of a Revolutionary

*Luigi Mangione, Krishnamurti and Christ: A
Theological Meditation*

Jeff Hood

There is something unbearably human about Luigi Mangione's story. Not in the alleged act that brought him into public view—the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson—but in the spiritual turbulence that preceded it. The fragments we possess reveal a young man consumed by questions that have haunted humanity's most serious souls: How does one live authentically in a profoundly sick society? What does moral courage demand when confronted with systemic cruelty? And perhaps most painfully—what happens to the human heart when it sees too much, feels too much and carries alone the weight of a world it believes to be irredeemably broken?

The profile that emerges from reporting defies easy categorization. Here was a valedictorian, an elite engineering graduate from an affluent Maryland family, a young man who read widely in philosophy, Christian scripture, mystical theology, political economy and Asian spirituality. Publicly shared notes and quotations reveal a mind drawn repeatedly to voices that challenge societal complacency—particularly Jiddu Krishnamurti and Jesus Christ. These fragments reveal a figure wrestling with what Paul Tillich called "ultimate concern," doing so in a way that fused existential distress with spiritual aspiration.

At the center of this turbulence lies what we might call Mangione's yearning to be revolutionary—a yearning that appears less political than it is psychological, moral and devastatingly spiritual. It arises from his sense that the world he inhabits—particularly the structures of American healthcare and capitalism—is morally disordered, even apocalyptic, in its contradictions. Within this worldview, both Krishnamurti and Jesus function not simply as teachers but as catalysts—figures of disruption whose voices illuminate society's sickness while summoning the individual into a kind of radical authenticity.

Nothing in this meditation should ever be taken as diminishing the fundamental moral gravity of what Mangione is alleged to have done. The killing of Brian Thompson was not a revolutionary act, nor an expression of genuine prophetic conscience, but a tragic and unequivocally evil outcome—an act that violates the sanctity of life at the center of both Christian theology and the ethical truthfulness Krishnamurti demands. Whatever anguish, alienation or spiritual yearning shaped Mangione's interior world cannot transfigure a moral wrong into anything less than wrong. The psychological and theological forces examined here help us understand the pathos of his inner storm, but they do not mitigate the reality that taking a human life is never sanctioned by either Christ's compassion or Krishnamurti's clarity. In this sense, the tragedy of Mangione's spiritual confusion is matched—and exceeded—by the tragedy inflicted upon Thompson, his family and the community harmed by the violent rupture of his death.

Krishnamurti and the Psychology of Revolutionary Seeing

The quote that Mangione chose to share publicly from Krishnamurti cuts like a blade: "It is no measure of health to be

well adjusted to a profoundly sick society." These words, drawn from Krishnamurti's vast body of work—including *Freedom from the Known* and *The First and Last Freedom*—reveal more than philosophical agreement. They suggest a young man who had crossed a threshold of perception from which there was no return.

Krishnamurti's philosophy is merciless in its clarity. Truth, he insists, cannot be mediated through institutions, traditions or authorities. It must be encountered directly, stripped of the thousand defenses we erect against reality. His concept of "choiceless awareness" demands we see things exactly as they are—not as we wish them to be, not as society tells us they are, but as they actually exist in their naked truth. And what Krishnamurti saw when he looked at modern society was not merely imperfection but structural sickness. Our institutions, he argued, mirror the inner disintegration of the human beings who built them. Fear breeds systems of control. Greed creates economies of exploitation. The well adjusted person, comfortable within such systems, is not healthy but symptomatic of deeper pathology.

For someone of Mangione's evident intellectual seriousness, encountering Krishnamurti must have been simultaneously liberating and devastating. Liberating because here was a voice that validated his growing sense that something was fundamentally wrong with the world he inhabited. Devastating because once you see through Krishnamurti's eyes, you can never quite see the same way again.

The comfortable illusions that allow most of us to navigate daily life begin to dissolve under Krishnamurti's gaze. The gap between what society professes—care, justice and human

dignity—and what it practices becomes an open wound. Krishnamurti warns that genuine insight produces sorrow, because it dismantles illusions that once provided meaning and stability. Not the dramatic sorrow of tragedy, but the quiet, persistent ache of seeing clearly in a world that depends on blindness.

The accounts of Mangione's writings suggest someone who experienced this alienation with particular intensity. His reported condemnations of the American healthcare system as parasitic and exploitative reflect not mere political disagreement but something deeper—a Krishnamurtian moral diagnosis that the system itself is spiritually sick, that it feeds on human suffering while speaking the language of care. To perceive social reality through this lens is inherently alienating. The clearer one's perception becomes, the more intolerable the structures of everyday life appear. You begin to see the violence hidden in bureaucracy, the cruelty disguised as policy and the human cost of what others call business as usual.

Yet here emerges a profound tension in Krishnamurti's teaching, one that seems to have seized Mangione's imagination. Krishnamurti repeatedly insists that revolution must be psychological, not political—that external systems cannot change fundamentally unless human consciousness itself changes. But his writing carries an ethical urgency that can stir something else entirely. When he describes society's sickness with the precision of a surgeon identifying cancer, when he strips away every comforting lie about why things are as they are, he sounds less like a meditation teacher and more like a prophet diagnosing collective sin.

For an intellectually earnest reader—particularly one already troubled by injustice—this creates a compelling internal struggle. If the world is sick, what is the morally responsible response? If insight reveals systematic exploitation, can one remain passive? Does clarity itself demand confrontation? This is the birthplace of what I'm calling the yearning to be revolutionary—a longing to somehow embody or enact the truth that one has painfully discerned. It's not primarily a political impulse but something more primal—a need to align one's actions with one's devastating clarity.

Jesus Christ and the Theology of Prophetic Disruption

If Krishnamurti provided Mangione with a lens for seeing society's sickness, Jesus Christ appears to have provided him with a model for confronting it. But the Jesus that emerges from Mangione's reported writings is not the gentle teacher of Sunday school imagination. This is the Jesus of the Gospels read through the lens of liberation theology—a prophetic disrupter who confronts the powers of his time with uncompromising moral clarity.

This is the Jesus who enters the temple and doesn't politely request reform but overturns tables in holy rage. The Jesus who looks at religious authorities and calls them whitewashed tombs—beautiful outside, full of death within. The Jesus who pronounces woes upon those who lay heavy burdens on others while refusing to lift a finger to help. This is the Jesus that Gustavo Gutiérrez describes when he writes that the gospel is a "liberating praxis" that exposes structures of oppression, the Jesus that Walter Brueggemann invokes when he speaks of prophetic imagination breaking open imperial consciousness.

This Jesus is not safe. He doesn't offer comfort to the comfortable or validation to systems of exploitation. Instead, he stands with the crushed and condemned, announcing judgment on the powers that crush them. For someone already disturbed by institutional violence, already seeing through Krishnamurti's lens the sickness of society, encountering this Jesus must have been like touching live wire.

The ethical demands of Jesus are maximalist, absolute, seemingly impossible. "Sell what you have and give to the poor." "Love your enemies." "Take up your cross." These aren't suggestions for gradual improvement but calls for total transformation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer captured this in his discussion of "the cost of discipleship," arguing that Christ calls believers into a form of life that exists in permanent contradiction with worldly power. There is no comfortable middle ground, no way to serve both God and mammon, no path that avoids the confrontation between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.

For Mangione, wrestling with the violence of American healthcare—a system that bankrupts the sick, that rations care by wealth, that transforms human suffering into profit margins—Jesus' words must have burned. Here was divine validation for his moral outrage, but also an intensification of his burden. Where Krishnamurti provided psychological clarity about society's sickness, Jesus provided ethical fire, a sense that this sickness is not merely unfortunate but sinful, not merely problematic but demanding of judgment.

Throughout Christian history, Jesus has inspired revolutionary movements. Francis of Assisi stripped naked in the public square to renounce his father's wealth. Liberation

theologians in Latin America declared God's preferential option for the poor. James Cone argued that Christ stands with the crucified peoples of every age, that the cross reveals God's solidarity with the lynched, the oppressed, the destroyed.

Mangione appears to have inhabited this revolutionary Christian imagination, though perhaps without the theological guardrails that traditionally accompany it. Jesus becomes for him a figure who not only validates moral outrage but embodies the confrontation he longs to enact—truth against corruption, compassion against cruelty and moral courage against institutional complicity. The revolutionary yearning that Krishnamurti awakened, Christ inflames and sanctifies, grounding it not merely in psychological insight but in divine confrontation with evil.

Convergence: Krishnamurti, Christ and Mangione's Moral Imagination

Mangione stands at the intersection of two powerful currents that don't naturally harmonize. Krishnamurti calls him to see through illusion, to understand the sickness of society with devastating clarity. Jesus calls him to challenge injustice, to overturn tables, to stand with the oppressed against their oppressors. Krishnamurti speaks of inner revolution. Jesus embodies prophetic action. Krishnamurti warns against being caught in reaction. Jesus seems to demand response.

This tension generates a psychological and theological field of extraordinary intensity. The convergence creates what we might call an existential posture of agonized clarity—the world is sick, the suffering is intolerable and one must do something. But what? And how? The questions become not philosophical but visceral, not abstract but immediate. Every day that passes,

people die from lack of healthcare. Every quarter, insurance companies report record profits. Every moment, the machine grinds on, and you see it, you see it all with Krishnamurti's clarity and feel it with Christ's compassion, and the seeing and feeling become almost unbearable.

This fusion of Krishnamurti and Christ creates a potent interior drama, but it also produces profound isolation. The one who sees society's sickness feels called to witness against it, but such witnessing is inherently lonely. Friends and family, well adjusted to the sick society, cannot understand the urgency you feel. They see your intensity as extremism, your clarity as obsession, your moral anguish as imbalance.

Kierkegaard wrote about this in *The Sickness Unto Death*—the despair of the self unable to reconcile its vision with the world's refusal to change. Mangione's writings, marked by moral disgust, urgency and loneliness, suggest someone overwhelmed by the contrast between what he believed society ought to be and what he saw it actually was. The more clearly he saw, the more alien he became. The more he understood, the less he could participate in the casual cruelties and comfortable lies that make normal life possible.

To yearn to be revolutionary in this sense is to feel both summoned and endangered. Summoned because moral clarity seems to demand response—how can one see suffering and remain passive? Endangered because revolutionary imagination, especially when isolated, can outstrip discernment, humility or hope. The yearning becomes a vocation—a calling to somehow embody truth in a world of lies, to be authentic in a society of masks and to stand for justice in systems of exploitation.

But without community, without spiritual elders, without theological formation, this revolutionary longing can become untethered from love and rooted instead in despair. Krishnamurti warns that psychological revolution must arise from freedom, not compulsion. Jesus warns that judgment belongs to God, not to the individual ego. Yet for someone experiencing the convergence of these influences in isolation, such warnings might feel like abstractions compared to the immediate reality of suffering—the concrete violence of systems that destroy human beings while speaking the language of care and service.

The Existential Consequences of Seeing a Sick World

There is a particular kind of sorrow that comes with clear seeing—what Krishnamurti calls the sorrow of perception, what Christian mystics like John of the Cross describe as the dark night of the soul. It's the sorrow of perceiving reality without the comfort of illusion, of seeing how things actually are rather than how we wish them to be. For most of us, this clarity comes in glimpses—moments when the veil lifts and we see the machinery of suffering that underlies what we call civilization. But we quickly look away, find distraction and desperately rebuild our necessary illusions.

Mangione appears to have lost this capacity for comfortable blindness. His alleged note describing the healthcare system as parasitic reflects not just anger but a form of existential outrage—the fury of someone who cannot stop seeing the preventable deaths, the bankruptcies, the families destroyed by medical debt and the profits extracted from human pain. To feel this sorrow without spiritual scaffolding, without a community that can hold and channel such perception, is spiritually

destabilizing. The sorrow becomes not a doorway to compassion but a weight that crushes.

Jesus' call to radical discipleship can inspire profound transformation, but it can also overwhelm those who internalize it without balance, community or grace. Bonhoeffer warned that discipleship without the sustaining presence of Christ becomes a crushing burden—not liberation but a new form of bondage, not freedom but an impossible weight of moral responsibility.

Similarly, Krishnamurti's demand for total psychological freedom, for complete authenticity, can exhaust those who interpret it as a personal mission to purify not just themselves but society. The revolutionary impulse, which begins as a yearning for wholeness and justice, becomes a burden too heavy for any individual to bear. Mangione appears to embody this collision of burdens—the Krishnamurtian imperative to see clearly crashing into the Christian imperative to act justly, with no mediating community, no theological tradition, no spiritual practices to sustain him through the tension.

At its core, what we see in Mangione's story is the tragedy of untended idealism—high moral aspiration untempered by theological community, psychological support or spiritual formation. His longing to confront injustice appears painfully sincere. His disgust with structural exploitation aligns with both Christian social teaching and Krishnamurti's critique of conditioning. The fragments of his thought that we possess reveal someone who cared, perhaps too much, about the suffering of others, who couldn't make peace with systems that transform human need into corporate profit.

Yet idealism without grounding becomes volatile. The revolutionary impulse, when isolated, becomes not a path to

healing but a manifestation of despair. The yearning to be revolutionary—to somehow embody truth in a false world, to enact justice in unjust system—becomes a consuming fire with no outlet, no expression and no community to channel it toward life rather than death.

The Yearning

Luigi Mangione emerges from the fragments we possess as a profoundly human figure—intelligent, morally sensitive, spiritually restless and existentially troubled. His engagement with Krishnamurti reveals a mind drawn to psychological truth telling, unable to accept the comfortable lies that make participation in a sick society bearable. His engagement with Jesus reveals a conscience drawn to prophetic justice, unable to tolerate the violence hidden in bureaucracy and profit margins. Between these two poles lies his yearning to be revolutionary—a yearning born from sorrow, sharpened by insight, inflamed by injustice and ultimately unanchored by community.

To read Mangione theologically is not to excuse but to understand—to see him as a figure caught in tensions that haunt modern spiritual life. The tension between seeing and acting, between despair and hope, between solitude and solidarity. The tension between the psychological revolution that Krishnamurti demands and the social revolution that Jesus embodies. The tension between the clarity that alienates and the blindness that enables participation.

The tragedy is not merely what he allegedly did, but the interior storm that drove him—the storm of a young man who saw too much, felt too much and carried alone the burden of a world he believed to be sick beyond healing. His story forces us to confront unsettling questions about modern life. What

happens when one perceives systemic evil with unbearable clarity but lacks the spiritual resources to transform that perception into sustainable action? What happens when revolutionary yearning has no community to hold it, no tradition to channel it and no elders to guide it? What happens when the desire for justice becomes untethered from love? When moral clarity becomes isolated from hope?

These questions reach beyond Mangione himself. They point toward a deeper spiritual crisis of our age—an age marked by institutional decay, existential loneliness, and a yearning, shared by many, to be revolutionary in a world that feels beyond repair. In Mangione's anguish, we might recognize our own struggles with systems that seem too big to challenge, suffering that seems too vast to address, clarity that brings more pain than peace.

Perhaps the deeper tragedy is not that Mangione felt called to be revolutionary, but that his revolutionary yearning found no community capable of holding it, no tradition able to channel it toward life rather than death. In a society that increasingly produces isolated individuals with acute moral sensitivity but no spiritual formation, no communal wisdom, no practices for sustaining hope in the face of systemic evil, we may see more young people crushed by the weight of their own clarity, consumed by their own yearning for a world transformed.

The question that haunts Mangione's story is not whether one should yearn to be revolutionary—in a sick society, such yearning may be a sign of spiritual health rather than pathology. The question is how such yearning can be held, channeled and sustained without destroying the one who carries it. This is ultimately a theological question, a communal question, a

question about how we accompany each other through the sorrow of seeing clearly in a world that depends on blindness.

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Chapter 4

Two Forms of Violence, One Path to Justice

Jeff Hood

On December 4, 2024, Luigi Mangione allegedly shot Brian Thompson outside a Manhattan hotel in Manhattan. Surveillance cameras captured the event and cartridge cases at the scene were inscribed with the words "delay," "deny" and "depose." Shortly thereafter, Attorney General Pam Bondi announced that federal prosecutors had been directed to seek the death penalty in the case.

But here is what the cameras did not show—the decades of deaths that happened quietly in hospital rooms and living rooms across our country as insurance companies, including the one Thompson led, denied care that could have saved lives. These deaths have no footage. No manifests. No criminal charges. Yet they are just as real.

Much of the national conversation has focused on whether Mangione should face the death penalty. That is the wrong question. The right question is what kind of justice responds to both forms of violence—the bullet and the denial letter—without creating more suffering. The answer is not execution. The answer is systemic reform paired with accountability. Anything less is a distraction from the justice we all need.

The Violence We Choose Not to See

Brian Thompson served as CEO of UnitedHealthcare, the insurance arm of UnitedHealth Group, from April 2021 until his death in December 2024. During his tenure, UnitedHealthcare covered more than 49 million Americans and generated roughly \$281 billion in revenue in 2023. Thompson's total compensation that year was approximately \$10.2 million, including salary, stock and option awards and non-equity incentive pay.

In 2024, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations issued a report criticizing major Medicare Advantage insurers, including UnitedHealthcare, Humana and CVS, for allegedly using algorithmic tools to deny or limit post-acute care claims, prioritizing profits over patient needs. But numbers alone cannot convey what denial means. Let me be specific with real cases.

Jeff Hall of Estero, Florida, became paralyzed from the neck down after developing Guillain-Barré Syndrome in February 2024. His Florida Blue insurance plan capped the number of days he could remain in acute rehabilitation. After being forced to step down to a lower-level nursing facility, his health deteriorated so rapidly within six days that he was sent to the emergency room, placed on a ventilator and required a second tracheostomy. Hall believes the coverage limits set his recovery back by months.

Eric Tennant, a 58-year-old safety instructor from West Virginia, was diagnosed with stage 4 bile duct cancer that spread to his bones. His oncologist recommended histotripsy, a noninvasive procedure using targeted ultrasound waves to destroy liver tumors that could extend his life and reduce his

need for grueling chemotherapy. His insurance denied the treatment.

Social media accounts documented further examples. One person wrote that Thompson's company put multiple family members in debt they would be paying for the rest of their lives and denied care for an uncle which led to his death. Another remembered the day UnitedHealthcare denied a one-night hospital stay for a twelve-year-old child as medically unnecessary following heart repair surgery.

Of course, these are people who survived to tell the tale. Imagine all who did not. These are not abstractions. These are slow deaths by spreadsheet. They are legal. They are profitable. And they are continuous.

Luigi Mangione: Reported Motive

As of December 2024, investigators report that Luigi Mangione's alleged motive was ill will toward the health insurance industry. According to a diary released by the prosecution, he left behind a handwritten document criticizing the healthcare system and health insurance companies. While any use of violence is wrong, his reported concerns reflect a broader problem—the healthcare system extracts wealth from human suffering. It creates algorithmic harm that is systematic, predictable and designed to maximize profit at the expense of patient well being. This type of harm contributes to more deaths each year than any mass shooter but happens quietly, behind terms like "prior authorization" and "out of network coverage."

Why the Death Penalty Is a Distraction

Bondi's announcement framed the shooting as premeditated and called for the death penalty. The call for execution satisfies something primal in us—the desire to see evil punished, to

watch justice served visibly and finally. But execution accomplishes nothing except spectacle. It does not bring Brian Thompson back. It does not prevent the next act of rage fueled violence. It does not address the despair that breeds in a system where people feel powerless. Most importantly, it lets us avoid the harder conversation about accountability for the systemic violence that created the conditions for this incident.

Consider what executing Mangione would communicate—that America takes murder seriously when it's committed by an individual with a gun, but not when it is committed by a corporation with a claims processing algorithm. That a CEO's life matters, but Jeff Hall's, Eric Tennant's and countless others whose stories were never told do not. That we will mobilize the full force of federal law to punish one alleged killer, but will not lift a finger to hold accountable systems that harm tens of thousands of patients annually. This is not justice. This is theater.

The Case Against Luigi Mangione

Luigi Mangione faces serious criminal charges and, if convicted, will face severe punishment. According to prosecutors, he reportedly arrived in New York City on November 24, 2024, more than a week before the shooting, and allegedly conducted reconnaissance near Thompson's hotel. On December 4, 2024, he is reported to have positioned himself between two cars on West 54th Street and, as Thompson passed by, fired several gunshots from a 9mm pistol, resulting in Thompson's death.

Killing an individual does not fix a system. It creates suffering for Thompson's family, his children, his loved ones—people who had nothing to do with corporate policy. If

Mangione intended to reform healthcare, the reported actions have failed. They did not change a single policy—at least in the short term. They only elevated the industry's profile and created trauma for reformers trying to advocate for systemic change—who are now concerned that their work is going to be destroyed by the reckless actions of one.

Mangione was indicted by a Manhattan grand jury on eleven counts, including one count of murder in the first degree, which alleges he killed the executive in furtherance of an act of terrorism, defined as an intent to intimidate or coerce the civilian population or a government unit. The terrorism charge was ultimately dropped. Mangione was also indicted on a plethora of federal charges as well (which is where the death sentence could possibly come from since the State of New York does not have the death penalty). Life imprisonment, if convicted, is the appropriate response. It removes a dangerous individual from society. It punishes severely. It satisfies accountability while avoiding the moral complications of state sanctioned killing.

The prosecution's case also highlights that Mangione reportedly believed the only way to achieve accountability was through violence. He appears to have thought the system was so indifferent to suffering that murder was rational. He was wrong about the method. But his reported beliefs point to systemic failings that demand attention.

The Accountability We Owe

If Luigi Mangione is executed, violence is answered with violence. Retribution may be satisfied, but the conditions that made Thompson's death feel like justice to a desperate individual remain unaddressed. True justice requires responding to both forms of violence—individual murder and systemic harm

through denial of care. It requires holding Mangione accountable, if convicted, and the healthcare industry accountable for ongoing systemic harm.

Healthcare reform worthy of this moment must include mandating public disclosure of denial rates. Every insurance company should publish, by diagnosis and treatment type, their approval and denial rates. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. We need independent medical review boards that take denial appeals out of the hands of insurance companies and establish state or federal boards of practicing physicians, not insurance employees, to review disputed denials.

We should criminalize fraudulent denials. If an insurance company denies a claim that an independent review later determines was medically necessary and the denial leads to death or serious harm, executives should face criminal liability. Administrative costs should be capped so that insurance companies spend at least 85% of premium revenue on actual healthcare, with administrative costs capped at 15%.

A victims' compensation fund should be established so that families who can demonstrate that insurance denials led to preventable death or serious harm have access to compensation from a mandatory fund funded by insurers based on denial rates. Finally, we must ban AI-driven denials without human review. Any AI-assisted denial must be reviewed by a licensed physician who examines patient records and explains, in writing, why care is refused.

These reforms are not symbolic. They save lives. They restore accountability. They address the despair that reportedly motivated Mangione's actions. They demonstrate that society

takes all forms of violence seriously, not just the ones captured on camera.

The Precedent We Set

Every decision in a case like this sends a message.

If Luigi Mangione is executed and healthcare remains unchanged, the message is clear—individual violence against executives is punished with death, but corporate harm is tolerated as business. Rage at the system may be understandable—but suffering is the only option.

If Luigi Mangione is imprisoned and healthcare reform pursued, the message is different—violence is unacceptable regardless of the perpetrator. Individuals who kill are punished. Systems that harm patients are reformed. Accountability is universal—and justice addresses all forms of harm.

The first scenario breeds more violence. The second prevents it. Mangione is accused of murder and, if convicted, will spend the rest of his life in prison. But the conversation should not end at sentencing. Treating the reported crime as isolated rather than a symptom of systemic failure guarantees others may reach the same despair driven choices.

Mercy, Justice and the Path Forward

Mercy is not weakness. It is the strength to resist the easy answer. The death penalty offers finality but no path forward. Life imprisonment preserves the possibility of integrity. It says we will not respond to killing by killing.

Justice requires addressing both sides of the violence equation. We must hold Luigi Mangione accountable if convicted and the healthcare industry accountable for taking thousands of lives. This is not a choice between punishing

Mangione or reforming healthcare. It is a demand to do both. Anything less is cowardice disguised as justice.

What We Choose: Death Penalty for Luigi Mangione?

Brian Thompson is dead. If convicted, Luigi Mangione will face the consequences of the legal system. These facts cannot change. Luigi Mangione does not deserve the death penalty. Neither did Brian Thompson. Thompson did not deserve to be ambushed outside a hotel. He was a human being, a father, a husband, a person whose life mattered. His death was tragic and unjustifiable.

The base line is simple—no one deserves to die for corporate decisions, personal rage or state retribution. Not the patients denied care like Jeff Hall and Eric Tennant. Not the thousands who will die from denied claims this year. Not Thompson. Not Mangione.

The question is whether society has the courage to pursue real justice—responding to all violence, not just the violence that makes headlines.

So, let us reject the false comfort of revenge and recognize that violence only begets more violence. True justice does not replicate the harm it condemns. It safeguards communities, protects the vulnerable and addresses the root causes of suffering. In ethically reflecting on the lives of both Brian Thompson and Luigi Mangione, we affirm that no one is beyond accountability and no one is beyond humanity. Let us choose policies that prevent death, heal wounds and create a society where compassion and fairness guide our laws. Justice is not measured in executions or the deaths we cause—but rather in the lives we save and the dignity we uphold.

Chapter 5

Luigi Mangione and the Presumption of Innocence

When the Courtroom Is Replaced by the Internet

Jeff Hood

In our era of instant outrage, a person's life can be decided with a click, a share or a viral post long before a single courtroom door swings open. Luigi Mangione knows this all too well. One photo, one snippet of information, one sensationalized headline and suddenly millions of people feel entitled to pass judgment. In the eyes of the public, he is already guilty or innocent, hero or villain, accused or condemned—labels applied without evidence, without testimony, without deliberation. This is not justice—it is theater. And in such a theater, the person at the center is rarely seen as human. Instead, he becomes a symbol, a story, a character to be debated, dissected and decided upon by strangers who have no access to the facts that matter most.

The Presumption of Innocence: Misunderstanding What "Not Guilty" Actually Means

What often gets lost in high-profile cases is the basic truth that "not guilty" is not a moral declaration of perfection. It doesn't mean a jury declares a defendant innocent in every sense of the word—it means the government failed to meet the extraordinary burden our system demands. That burden is intentionally high, designed by people who understood—from history and experience—how easily assumptions, emotion and politics can warp the search for truth.

Prosecutors must prove not just that a crime occurred, but that it occurred in a very particular way, under a defined legal framework, with a specific state of mind and backed by evidence that can withstand scrutiny. Belief, rumor or gut feeling is not enough. And yet the public rarely sees the painstaking work that trials demand—the hours reviewing evidence, questioning witnesses and weighing facts against law. To the casual observer, justice can seem instantaneous, a verdict delivered with a headline or a retweet. In reality, it is slow, meticulous—and often uncertain—and that uncertainty is exactly the point.

The Danger of Turning Humans Into Symbols

The louder a case becomes, the less patience people have for complexity. When Luigi Mangione becomes a symbol—a shorthand for fear, anger or outrage—he stops being a human being with rights and starts being content to consume, a story to react to, a target to condemn. That shift is corrosive. It erodes due process, it erodes fairness and it erodes the basic decency a free society owes to its members.

Courtrooms have rules. The internet does not. Evidence must be authenticated. Witnesses must be questioned under oath. Every claim must meet standards of proof the public never sees. Outside of court, accuracy is optional. Rumors spread faster than corrections. The crowd decides for itself what is true. That is why the presumption of innocence exists—to restrain the mob, to remind us that no amount of certainty outside a courtroom can replace the work of evidence and deliberation and to protect the human being at the center of the case, no matter how uncomfortable or unpopular.

The Presumption of Innocence Protects Truth, Not Just Defendants

Some critics treat the presumption of innocence as a shield for the guilty. In reality, it is a safeguard for truth. Without it, wrongful convictions multiply, certainty replaces accuracy and emotion eclipses reason. History shows that when society abandons this principle, it does not become safer—it becomes reckless.

The fate of Luigi Mangione is for a jury to decide, not a hashtag, not a comment thread or viral video. What matters is that he starts with the same rights any of us would demand in his place. The measure of justice is not how it treats people we like, but how it treats those we are tempted to condemn.

Mangione is entitled to the presumption of innocence not because his case is simple or because the verdict will be favorable, but because he is a human being standing accused in a country that claims to value fairness. If we allow that protection to slip simply because a case is sensational, emotionally charged or politically convenient, then we have failed him and the principles we claim to uphold. In a world where public opinion moves faster than courts, innocence means nothing unless we defend it. And until we do, every one of us is at risk of being judged not by evidence, but by the fleeting judgment of social media.

Chapter 6

Moral Tension in an Age of Structural Violence

Alli Sullivan

The case of Luigi Mangione is a morally complex one. As a death penalty abolitionist, this case has tested the strength of my convictions on many fronts. On one hand we emphatically oppose murder in all of its forms—whether at the hands of an individual or by the state—but as someone who is chronically ill and has had to interact with the US medical system far more than probably most people will in their entire life, I struggle with feeling compassion for Brian Thompson (the slain United Healthcare executive). It's hard to admit that. As abolitionists we are consistently put in positions where we are forced to answer why someone deserves mercy despite the horrific act the condemned individual may have committed. This situation is practically in reverse—why should we feel sorry for an individual who knowingly made the lives of millions of people insured by the company hell?

We condemn Luigi's actions not because of who Brian Thompson was, but because of who we are. Our condemnation of Luigi's actions doesn't discount the harm that Brian Thompson and United Healthcare caused—it merely affirms that murder is never an acceptable response.

Donald Trump has fetishized executions his whole life. It is especially dangerous to give power to such a person because history shows that it never stops at just one category of people.

He oversaw one of the most prolific federal execution sprees the nation has seen in the past century. With the US Supreme Court stacked on his side—they were able to push through executions of 13 people in a mere six months—each of whom had glaring issues in their cases that merited relief. It was a miracle that it took them until the final six months of his first term to get the executions going and we knew that nothing would stop him if he was given that power again.

For more than four years, I was part of the core team that worked to get President Biden's Department of Justice to initiate a moratorium on federal executions, and ultimately, to commute the sentences of 37 of the 40 individuals who were on federal death row. Still, President Biden did not go far enough—he left a handful of individuals on the federal and military death rows to be at the mercy of this current administration. Within hours of reassuming office, Trump quietly signed a death penalty executive order—hidden amongst the flurry of numerous other orders signed in rapid succession. The administration has turned Luigi's case into the poster child for their death penalty-forward agenda—simultaneously painting Brian Thompson as a "perfect victim" and Luigi as a "perfect villain"—far from the nuanced approach that such a case deserves. Luigi's case and the federal government's response is yet another cautionary tale that demonstrates the dangers of allowing the state to dictate which victims' lives are worthy and which are not.

Murder can never be an appropriate response to harm—but this is especially true when it is the government killing its own citizens. What damaging example does this set for our country's youth? Our government is teaching young people that violence is a legitimate form of conflict resolution. It normalizes the idea

that killing can be justified when carried out by the powerful. And it creates a moral contradiction at the center of governance—mirroring the very violence it claims to reject. Violence must not be at the heart of the example set by the state—especially with the US' posture on the world stage. Our country's global power demands that we are obligated to adhere to the highest of moral standards not to enable the erosion of human rights the world over. The federal government's actions in Luigi's case wholly betray that responsibility.

First introduced by Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung in the late '60s and refined by doctor and medical anthropologist, Paul Farmer, beginning in the '90s, structural violence emerged as a concept to explain how racism, poverty, colonial legacy and political economy become embodied as illness and decreased mortality. Specifically referenced by Farmer in how the AIDS and Tuberculosis epidemics have played out globally over the last several decades—the proliferation of those epidemics doesn't rest in our inability to treat those conditions but in a lack of "political will" (Farmer 152). That lack of political will is making us all less safe by encouraging both pathogens to become increasingly treatment resistant. While the Luigi Mangione case is not focused on either of these epidemics, the concept of structural violence can similarly help us to understand the "confused skein of tragedies" that define the experiences of the millions of people at the mercy of health insurance companies like United. The structural violence around health in the US goes beyond one's mere access to healthcare—via health insurance—through to the social determinants of health which demonstrate how individuals have poorer long-term health outcomes the lower on the social ladder they find

themselves—independent of their access to medical care. Politicians, and the health insurance companies they embolden and protect, need not pull out a gun and shoot people on the street for their actions to be inherently violent. Whether by overtly violent means or the blatant disregard these hegemonic institutions have for those at their mercy, the end result is much the same—human casualties. As much as I detest the mode that Luigi Mangione took to get to this space, it is undeniable that his actions blasted open a discourse in our country that other cases couldn't seem to do with the same vigor.

People like Brian Thompson have been responsible for a significant degree of the suffering felt by those in the US. Delays in receiving care and outright denying care to those who need it most is an egregious form of violence—but such a person's stature shields them from accountability. Their actions are seen as detached and bureaucratic—they aren't forced to bear witness to the collateral damage caused by their decisions. These preventable delays in care not only cause suffering in the moment, but for a whole array of conditions, such delays can cost people their lives. Insurance companies force you to exhaust all of the least expensive treatments or diagnostic tools first before they will consider paying for others—even ones that are much more effective or precise. I've experienced this first hand.

It was the summer of 2022—I was home recovering from throat surgery when one of my doctors called to inform me that the results of recent bloodwork we conducted came back abnormal. These weren't your standard blood counts, A1C or metabolic panels. These ones looked at immune markers. After basic inflammatory markers came back markedly increased, suspicion grew for some sort of systemic, inflammatory

condition—perhaps even some form of cancer like multiple myeloma. In the weeks that followed that phone call as I waited to receive my first evaluation by an oncologist I was a complete shell of myself. I couldn't think about anything but "the C word". That was the first time I felt genuinely terrified by what laid ahead. All I could think about was that I was not ready to die. I hadn't even finished college at that point. I just barely got into this movement that quickly consumed my life. All I could think about was how much work there was still left to do on the death penalty. The first visit with the oncologist came around and while he assured me that he did not believe that I had multiple myeloma, he couldn't give us any more answers beyond that we were dealing with a "chronic, systemic, uncharacterized inflammatory disease". By then I started to collect specialists like they were trading cards. A rheumatologist. An immunologist. Naturopaths. An otolaryngologist. Another oncologist. Another otolaryngologist. A gastroenterologist. Another rheumatologist. An endocrinology surgical oncologist. A neuroimmunogastroenterologist. An orthopedic surgeon. I am now waiting for my third oncology evaluation.

More than four years after the first onset of these bizarre symptoms that seem to continue proliferating they still don't know what to do with me. They know my immune system is spiraling out of control and impacting nearly all of my body systems in some way, but no one knows what to call it or how to help me. I wake up every single morning not sure how I am going to be feeling that day. Unsure if we are going to have another trip to the ER or be confined to the bed for the day. Sometimes excruciating pain wakes me from my sleep and I physically cannot stand without vomiting. I've passed out in the shower.

I've had focal seizures at my desk while working. I've had skin reactions that caused my skin to peel off, leaving it raw and burning. Many of my physicians who are part of larger healthcare conglomerates can only see me a few times per year. When they do, they've had no time to meaningfully consider where to go next with me. They are bound by what health insurance dictates, leaving me without answers or treatment, or at risk of ensuing thousands of dollars in medical expenses insurance spontaneously decided that day they did not want to cover. Even when we've exhausted all of our options, insurance still tried to fight us on covering expenses they were obligated to cover. Three and half years after my throat surgery, insurance still refuses to cover my narcotic pain medication—this is despite the fact that I already tried the medication they contracted to cover and it triggered a mast cell reaction.

Still, I am one of the lucky ones. I have not been on the operating table mid-surgery when insurance calls to tell the team that they are revoking coverage of a procedure they already approved or are refusing to pay for anesthesia. I have not had my last hope of surviving a deadly disease like cancer pulled out from under me. I have not been denied medication that is quite literally life and death for some people. Though not "murder" in the legal sense, the flagrant disregard for life that UnitedHealth and other similar companies have created preventable death and suffering on a massive scale. Somehow that seems worse than a one off situation.

There can be two truths at the same time: Luigi committed a harm that must not be minimized, but Brian Thompson inflicted a different kind of harm—systemic, widespread, rooted in profit-driven cruelty.

The federal government's pursuit of the death penalty for Luigi Mangione isn't justice. They are doing what they do best: reducing a complex situation down to a seemingly "simple" spectacle—allowing them to claim the moral authority that they could not even begin to deserve. And it prevents us from meaningfully reckoning with the layered realities produced by this situation—healthcare injustice, corporate violence, untreated illness, and desperation. Killing Luigi would only serve political needs, not moral ones. I guess that can be expected from an administration whose only goals are to bolster their personal political standing without any regard for those they are supposed to serve.

Envisioning what justice should look like for Luigi requires that we honor moral consistency and the realities of the harm he caused. Luigi should absolutely face consequences for his action, including a long-term confinement that incapacitates him from creating further harm. As a country we have gotten really good at conflating accountability with retribution as if inflicting reciprocal violence will get us anywhere. Accountability must be rooted in responsibility not sheer punishment—although that concept seems to go right over the heads of those making these decisions. They seemingly get off on inflicting the harshest punishment to anyone they deem a "villain". As is supposed to be evaluated anytime someone is facing criminal charges, but particularly when the death penalty is on the table, there needs to be a thorough and transparent consideration of mitigating evidence—in this case, the degree that chronic illness, healthcare denial, and systemic failures underlied Luigi's motivations. Luigi's case should be used to illuminate—not excuse—the consequences of structural violence.

Perhaps now this situation is still too raw, and while it will be impossible to reverse the harm Luigi committed, it will always be possible for him to meaningfully contribute from within incarceration—to continue to telling the truth about how damaging our current healthcare landscape is, to call for long overdue reforms and expanded social safety nets, to express remorse. His case has a massive spotlight shone on it right now. The federal government is turning this into a circus to justify the actions that they are taking against him—not all that far removed from displaying his head on a silver platter to make an example out of him. That said, it's not all bad. And whether they like it or not, that spotlight is only giving more ammo to the efforts that seek to overturn this system. It is my hope that this case shifts us, as a nation, from purely punishing the symptoms of a dysfunctional system, to confronting the root causes of such dysfunction. Our government is supposed to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people". While we remain far from fully realizing those ideals, the discourse spawned by Luigi's actions has—in some small measure—contributed to a broader reckoning with what they demand.

I continue to struggle with the idea that Luigi needs to be held accountable for the murder of Brian Thompson—someone who benefited tremendously from upholding an unjust system that harmed far too many people to count. There is a temptation to make an exception in this case. But justice cannot be built on exceptions—moral consistency is the hardest to maintain precisely when it matters most. Operating with integrity, especially within the anti-death penalty movement, demands that we confront the truth no matter how difficult or how uncomfortable it makes us. What should happen to Luigi is

ultimately a question about what we owe each other, what we expect from our government, and what kind of country we want to live in. Our vision of justice must always refuse to mirror the violence we seek to end.

Farmer, Paul, and John Boli. 2019. *An Anthropology of Structural Violence*. In F. Lechner (Ed.), *The Globalization Reader* (pp. 147–153). Wiley Blackwell.

Chapter 7

Moral Caution: Luigi Mangione and Our Public Hearts

Jeff Hood

Moral caution is often most hidden when it is most needed. Today, Luigi Mangione steps once again into public view for his latest hearing, and once again the atmosphere around him is charged like a gathering storm. These moments—when a defendant is brought into a courtroom, when families hold their breath, when the public tightens its' collective jaw—are moments that test not just the legal system, but the soul of a people. Every time Mangione enters a courtroom, emotions ignite. Some see a monster. Some see a tragedy. Some see a man consumed by demons of his own making. Others see someone misunderstood, a figure in need of compassion or at least careful consideration. Spirituality invites us to slow down, to breathe and to resist the false simplicity of a story told only in extremes. Spirituality demands moral caution—on every side.

Understanding Moral Caution

Moral caution is not softness—and it is not denial. It does not erase the life of Brian Thompson, whose death remains a deep wound. It does not dismiss the anguish of his family or the fear experienced by a community. Nor does it demand uncritical support of Mangione or the dismissal of the very real concerns of those who see harm. Rather, moral caution is the discipline

of refusing to let grief harden into retribution—or hope harden into justification—or fear metastasize into dehumanization. It is the insistence that moral clarity cannot be born from moral shortcuts. It is the discipline of simply asking—

What kind of person am I becoming in this moment?

In cases like this, emotion often becomes its own kind of gravity, pulling people into narratives of absolute guilt or absolute innocence, villainy or victimhood. Once a person is placed into one of these categories, everything else follows automatically. Supporters risk minimizing the pain caused by Mangione's actions. Detractors risk seeing him only as a vessel of evil. Both sides are vulnerable to forgetting that people are not categories. Even those who do harm are more than the worst thing they've ever done, and even those who suffer deeply may hold complicated responsibilities. Every human life, even one marked by catastrophic choices, remains complex, contradictory and real. Spiritual voices throughout history have warned against the certainty of crowds. They remind us that fear and hope alike have a tendency to dress themselves as justice.

A Spiritual Crossroads

Today's hearing is not merely a legal moment—it is a spiritual crossroads. The question before us is not only what will happen to evidence surrounding Luigi Mangione, but also what will happen to us as we witness this story unfold.

Will we allow ourselves to be swept along by the strongest emotions in the room?

To practice moral caution is to acknowledge the humanity in every position—that Mangione is not "the worst of the worst"—and that his supporters are not necessarily blind—nor his detractors entirely righteous. The phrase "the worst of the

worst" is usually reserved for rhetorical theater, not real people. It is the language of erasure, the language systems use when they want to stop thinking and start punishing.

Humanity Beyond a Single Act

Mangione, despite what did or didn't happen, remains a human being whose life contains more than a single act. His suffering, his history, his brokenness and his capacity for remorse or change—all of it still matters. And those who are horrified by his actions are entitled to their grief, their fear and their calls for accountability. Imagining a person as simply a vessel of pure evil, or imagining outrage as purely virtuous, may feel emotionally satisfying—but it is theologically lazy and morally dangerous.

The Danger of Dehumanization

Spiritual ethics remind us that when a society begins treating any person as though they have slipped beyond the reach of humanity—whether the threat comes from a criminal act or from a fervent ideology—it reveals something about the society, not the person. When we permit ourselves to dehumanize someone, or to sanctify another unquestioningly, we become the kind of people who can justify anything. Violence of language prepares the way for violence of policy. Violence of imagination prepares the way for violence of action. That is why moral caution is not optional—it is a safeguard against our darkest impulses masquerading as righteousness.

And yet, moral caution must sit alongside honesty. A man is dead. A family grieves. A community is shaken. None of this should be minimized. The spiritual voice does not silence pain—it demands that pain be honored without being weaponized. Moral caution means holding justice and compassion in the same breath, without sacrificing either one.

It means insisting that the demand for accountability does not require us to become less human in the process—whether we are critics or defenders, witnesses or participants.

Witnessing a Charged Moment

When Luigi Mangione walks into that courtroom today, the air will thicken. Reporters will sharpen their attention. Supporters and critics will brace themselves. Emotions will swirl like a tornado. Spirituality asks us all to step back and resist the momentum. It asks us to see the person at the center of this maelstrom—not the symbol—and to see the humanity in each other—even when disagreement runs deep. It asks us to reject the easy narrative that says some people are disposable and others are sacred.

Chapter 8

The Cult of Luigi

*How Fandom is Killing the Conversation That Can
Save His Life*

Jeff Hood

I've spent years sitting with men on death row. I've held their hands as the state strapped them to gurneys. I've watched them take their last breaths. I know what it means to fight for someone's life—not as a symbol, not as a meme, not as a mascot for political rage—but as an actual human being whose heart will stop beating if we fail.

And so, I watch what has become of the Luigi Mangione conversation with a kind of exhausted grief.

What began as a legitimate moment of national reckoning—about healthcare, about corporate greed, about the desperation of those trapped in a broken system—has devolved into something bizarre. A fandom. A brand. A carnival of t-shirts, fan clubs and glorified violence dressed up in the language of revolution. And in the process, everyone has forgotten the one conversation that actually matters—keeping Luigi Mangione alive.

An Abolitionist's Position

Let me be clear. I am an abolitionist. I have dedicated my life to ending the death penalty. I believe that the state has no right to kill anyone—not the guilty, not the innocent, not the sympathetic, not the reviled. My opposition to Luigi Mangione's potential execution is not contingent on whether I like him,

whether I agree with him or whether I find his actions defensible. It is rooted in the conviction that killing is wrong. Period. That includes the killing of Brian Thompson. That includes any killing the state wants to do in response.

But here's what the Luigi fandom doesn't seem to understand: you cannot build a movement to save someone's life on a foundation of celebrating death.

The Digital Circus

Open any social media platform and you'll find yourself drowning in it. The Luigi content is relentless. Overwhelming. Deeply unserious. TikToks set to trending audio glorifying the shooting. Instagram accounts dedicated entirely to fan edits—slow-motion footage of his perp walk set to moody music, as if we're watching a movie trailer rather than a murder suspect being led to arraignment. Twitter threads spinning elaborate theories about his manifesto, his motives and his supposed genius. They're treating the whole thing like an alternate reality game rather than a capital case.

Memes and Mythology

The memes multiply faster than anyone can track. Luigi as a saint, complete with halo. Luigi as revolutionary icon, fist raised. Luigi photoshopped into historical paintings, into movie posters, into every conceivable context that transforms a real human being into a consumable image. The comments sections overflow with hearts, fire emojis and declarations of love for a man most of these people know nothing about beyond what they've projected onto him.

And then there are the thirst posts. Thousands upon thousands of them. But I'll get to that insanity in a moment.

Disconnection from Consequence

What strikes me most about the social media frenzy is its complete disconnection from consequence. These posts exist in a vacuum where a man didn't actually die, where a family isn't actually grieving, where another man isn't actually facing the possibility of state execution. It's all content. All engagement. All performance for an algorithm that rewards the most extreme, the most provocative and the most shareable takes. Nuance doesn't trend. Complexity doesn't go viral. What goes viral is "Luigi did nothing wrong" and "CEO of the year" jokes—and endless variations on the theme that murder is actually fine if the victim was rich.

I scroll through it and I think about the men I've sat with on death row. I think about how the public's perception of them—shaped by media coverage, by the narratives that took hold in the immediate aftermath of their crimes—followed them all the way to the death chamber. Public opinion calcifies. First impressions become permanent impressions. And right now, in the crucial early stages of this case, the impression being created is that Luigi Mangione is the mascot of a movement that celebrates killing.

The Prosecution Is Watching

The prosecution is watching. They're screenshotting. They're building a case not just against one man but against an ideology they'll argue he represents. Every glorifying post is evidence. Every celebratory meme is ammunition. The social media circus isn't just distasteful—it's actively dangerous to the man these people claim to support.

The Courthouse Carnival

If the online behavior is unhinged, what's happening in physical space is somehow worse.

I've seen the footage. The crowds gathered outside the courthouse, camping overnight like they're waiting for concert tickets or a product drop. People racing through the streets to catch a supposed glimpse of him. Pushing and shoving. Phones held high to capture the moment for their feeds. The energy is not that of a political protest or a legal proceeding. It's the energy of a circus.

Spectacle Over Substance

This is a man on trial for murder. This is a courthouse, not a concert venue. But you wouldn't know it from the scene outside. People have shown up in homemade Luigi merchandise. They've brought signs declaring their love. They've treated his court appearances as entertainment, as spectacle, as something to be witnessed, documented and shared for clout.

I think about other trials I've followed over the years. I think about the families of victims having to walk through crowds to enter courtrooms. I think about what it must be like for Brian Thompson's loved ones to see all this. To know that their grief has become a backdrop for other people's content creation. Whatever you think about healthcare executives and corporate greed, there are children who lost their father. There are all sorts of family and friends that lost someone who mattered to them. And outside the courthouse, people are tailgating like it's a damn football game.

Misdirected Dedication

The camping is disturbing. The dedication required to sleep on concrete for the chance to sit in a courtroom gallery—that's real commitment. Imagine if that commitment were directed toward actual healthcare advocacy. Imagine if those hours were spent organizing, lobbying, building power to change the

systems that everyone claims to be so angry about. Instead, they're spent in pursuit of proximity to a defendant. In pursuit of the experience of being there. In pursuit of something that looks like activism but produces nothing except social media content and a deep sense of unease in anyone watching who understands what's actually at stake.

This is what happens when politics becomes fandom. The goal stops being change and starts being experience. The point stops being outcome and starts being fan participation. Everyone wants to be part of the moment. Nobody wants to do the work that might actually prevent the next desperate person from feeling like violence is their only option.

The Thirst That Consumes Everything

And then there's the thing that might be the strangest element of all—the obsession with his appearance.

Luigi Mangione is, by conventional standards, an attractive man. He has the kind of face that photographs well. The kind of bone structure that catches light in flattering ways. And the internet has responded to this fact with a fervor that borders on collective madness.

Aestheticizing a Murder Suspect

"Hot mugshot guy." "He can murder me any day." "I would let him deny my claims." The jokes write themselves, apparently, and people cannot stop writing them. His face has been plastered on fan accounts dedicated entirely to his appearance. People have dissected his features with the intensity usually reserved for celebrity crushes. They've created edits set to love songs. They've posted fantasies that range from mildly inappropriate to genuinely disturbing.

This is a man who most likely shot another human being in the back. A suspected murderer whose trial will determine whether he lives or dies. And the primary discourse in significant corners of the internet is about how cute he is.

The Collapse of Moral Seriousness

I don't know how to adequately express how deranged this is. The complete collapse of any moral seriousness. The reduction of a murder case to aesthetic appreciation. The way that physical attractiveness has become, for many people, a kind of absolution—as if being good-looking somehow mitigates the gravity of taking a life.

We've seen this before, of course. The phenomenon of the attractive criminal who captures public fascination is not new. But the scale and intensity of this particular outbreak feels unprecedented. It's not a subset of the conversation—it has become the conversation for far too many people. When articles about the case lead with his appearance, when news coverage mentions his "fanbase" in the same breath as the charges against him, something has gone seriously wrong with our collective capacity for moral reasoning.

Thirst as Cover for Violence

And here's what makes it particularly insidious—the thirst content provides cover for the violence glorification. When someone posts "I know he killed someone but he's so hot," they're normalizing the minimization of murder. They're modeling a response that treats killing as secondary to attractiveness. They're training an audience to see violence as an acceptable trade-off for aesthetic pleasure. The obsession with his looks isn't separate from the celebration of his actions—it's part of the same moral collapse.

I think about the men I've ministered to on death row. Most of them are not conventionally sexy or hot. Most of them don't have the bone structure that trends on social media. Most often, it is just them and I fighting for their lives. And I can't help but wonder, would any of this energy would exist if Luigi Mangione looked different. If he were older, heavier, less photogenic—would anyone be camping outside his courthouse? Would anyone be making fan edits? Or is the whole carnival predicated on the accident of his appearance?

The answer, I suspect, is damning.

The Descent into Unseriousness

I am haunted by watching the trajectory of all of this. In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, there was at least a kernel of something real in the public response. People were angry about healthcare. They were sharing stories of denied claims, of loved ones who died because insurance companies refused to cover treatment, of their own battles with a system designed to extract profit from suffering. The anger was raw and legitimate. For a brief moment, it seemed like this tragedy might catalyze something meaningful—a genuine reckoning with the cruelty baked into American healthcare.

That moment passed. And what replaced it has grown more frivolous, more detached, more performatively absurd with each passing week.

From Critique to Content

The early posts at least gestured toward systemic critique. Now the content is pure entertainment. The memes have become increasingly ironic, increasingly self-referential, increasingly removed from anything resembling political substance. People aren't sharing stories about healthcare

anymore. They're sharing Luigi fan cams. Debating which photos of him are hottest. Creating elaborate inside jokes that require knowledge of forty previous layers of Luigi lore to even understand.

The discourse has developed its own grammar. Its own vocabulary. Its own closed loop of self-reference. New participants don't engage with healthcare policy—they learn the memes. They memorize the canon. They demonstrate their belonging by mastering the language of the fandom rather than by articulating any coherent political vision. It's not about what you believe anymore. It's about whether you're in on the joke.

The Inversion

I've watched this happen in real time. The ratio of substantive posts to absurdist content has inverted completely. What started as maybe seventy percent genuine outrage and thirty percent internet nonsense has become ninety-five percent nonsense and five percent people desperately trying to steer the conversation back toward anything real. Those people are drowned out. They're not funny. They're not engaging. They're not feeding the algorithm what it wants.

The unseriousness compounds on itself. Each ironic post lowers the bar for the next one. Each absurdist meme makes genuine engagement seem naive. Uncool. Embarrassingly earnest. To be serious about Luigi Mangione's case—to actually care about the legal implications, the death penalty threat, the healthcare system—is to mark yourself as someone who doesn't get it. The fandom rewards those who treat it all as entertainment and punishes those who insist on treating it as what it actually is—a matter of life and death.

The Pattern Repeats

I see this pattern and I recognize it. It's what happens to every political moment in the digital age. The initial energy gets captured, commodified and memed into meaninglessness. What could have been a movement becomes a moment. What could have been a moment becomes content. What could have been content becomes background noise indistinguishable from everything else fighting for attention in the feed.

The supporters have become fundamentally unserious because unseriousness is what social media thrives on. Seriousness is boring. Seriousness doesn't get engagement. Seriousness asks people to sit with discomfort, to hold complexity, to resist the easy satisfaction of great content. The Luigi fandom has chosen the easy path at every turn, and now they're so far down it that they couldn't find their way back to seriousness if they wanted to.

The Clock Is Ticking

Meanwhile, the legal case proceeds. The death penalty remains on the table. The stakes remain exactly as high as they always were. But you wouldn't know it from the discourse. You'd think this was all a game. You'd think there was nothing actually on the line. You'd think one had all the time in the world to joke around before getting serious.

There is no time. There never is. And by the time the fandom realizes that, it will be far too late to matter.

The Glorification Problem

The cognitive dissonance at the heart of all this is staggering. I scroll through social media and see the same people posting "Free Luigi" alongside memes celebrating the murder of a man in front of his family. I see fan art depicting Mangione as a heroic figure, gun in hand, as if the taking of human life is something

to be aestheticized. I see people wearing shirts emblazoned with his face at rallies supposedly dedicated to healthcare justice, as if the man has become a mascot rather than a defendant facing the ultimate punishment.

This is not activism. This is cosplay.

And it is killing any chance to mount a serious defense against the death penalty in this case.

Public Opinion and Capital Cases

Here's what the fandom doesn't grasp—public opinion matters in capital cases. It matters enormously. Prosecutors make charging decisions based on what they think juries will support. Governors make clemency decisions based on political calculations. The more Luigi Mangione becomes a cult figure celebrated for violence, the easier it becomes for the state to seek his death. Every "hero" meme, every glorifying post, every piece of merchandise treating murder as something cool—it all feeds the prosecution's narrative that this man represents a dangerous ideology that must be stamped out with the ultimate penalty.

The fandom is not helping him. They are building his coffin.

The Tyrannicide Delusion

The tyrannicide argument is perhaps the most maddening pseudo-intellectual argument I have ever heard. I've seen it everywhere now—this unhinged justification that the killing of Brian Thompson was somehow a legitimate act of political resistance, comparable to the assassination of tyrants throughout history. It's wrapped in the language of philosophy—as if dropping names makes murder morally acceptable.

What Tyrannicide Actually Means

Tyrannicide, in the classical sense, referred to the killing of political rulers who held absolute power over life and death.

Rulers who could not be removed through any other means. Rulers whose continued reign meant the ongoing slaughter of innocents. Brian Thompson was a CEO. He was not a king. He was not a dictator. He was a man in a suit who made decisions within a corporate structure that is, yes, often cruel and deadly in its effects—but he was not irreplaceable, not unreachable through other means and by no means the sole architect of the healthcare system's failures.

The Door to Moral Chaos

More importantly, the tyrannicide tradition has always been deeply contested precisely because it opens the door to exactly the kind of moral chaos we're now witnessing. Once you accept that individuals can decide for themselves who deserves to die for their perceived crimes against society, you have abandoned any coherent ethical framework. You have embraced vigilante violence as a legitimate political tool. And you have made it impossible to argue against the state's own violence in return.

You Cannot Have It Both Ways

The Luigi fandom wants to have it both ways. They want to celebrate the killing of Thompson while decrying any attempt to kill Mangione. But you cannot coherently argue that violence is acceptable when your side does it and unacceptable when the state does it. Either we believe in the sanctity of human life or we don't. Either we oppose killing or we don't.

I oppose killing. All of it. The murder on that Manhattan sidewalk and the potential murder in a federal death chamber. But I can only make that argument credibly if I refuse to celebrate either one.

The Conversation We Lost

What we needed—what we still need—is a serious conversation about healthcare in America. About the desperation that drives people to the breaking point. About corporate structures that prioritize profit over human survival. About the moral weight of decisions made in boardrooms that ripple out into emergency rooms and funeral homes. These are urgent, necessary conversations. They deserve our full attention.

Instead, we're getting fresh Luigi gear and memes.

Hijacked by Fandom

We got fan clubs trading conspiracy theories about whether he was a CIA plant or a revolutionary genius. We got merchandise vendors making money off a murder. We got people more interested in following the aesthetic of rebellion than in doing the actual work of changing systems. The healthcare conversation got hijacked by people who wanted a hero, and they didn't much care that their hero is more than likely a killer.

This is what fandoms do. They flatten complexity into simple narratives. They transform human beings into symbols. They create in-groups and out-groups based on loyalty rather than principle. And they are absolutely useless when it comes to the slow, grinding and unglamorous work of actual change.

The Human Being Beneath the Mythology

I don't know Luigi Mangione. I've never sat with him. I haven't looked into his eyes or heard his story in his own words. But I know this—he is a human being. He has friends and family that love him. He is a man who, whatever he did, does not deserve to be killed by the state. And he is also a man who by all indications did something terrible—something that caused unimaginable grief to a family, something that cannot be undone.

How the State Wins

Every execution I've witnessed has taught me the same lesson—the state wins when we let the conversation become about whether someone deserves to die. The state wins when we allow the humanity of the condemned to be eclipsed by the nature of their crime—or, in this case, by the bizarre mythology their supporters have constructed. The state wins when we make it easy for them to kill.

The Luigi fandom is making it very easy.

Afterword: What Must Be Done?

Alli Sullivan

This book has asked you to hold discomfort without resolution...to condemn violence while understanding desperation, to oppose execution while refusing to celebrate murder, to see the humanity in a man accused of terrible things without erasing the humanity of his victim. If you've made it this far...you've resisted the temptation to simplify. But greater understanding is not enough. The question now is what you will do with the clarity you've gained. We do not need more observers. We need people willing to act...not through violence, which solves nothing, but through the slow, unglamorous, essential work of changing systems designed to extract profit from suffering and death from despair.

The choice before us is stark: we can execute Luigi Mangione, leave the healthcare system unchanged and wait for the next desperate person to reach the same catastrophic conclusion...or we can pursue real accountability on every front, punishing violence while dismantling the conditions that breed it. One path offers the false comfort of spectacle. The other offers the possibility of a society where fewer people die...at the hands of individuals, corporations or the state. We know which path leads to more death. The only question is whether we have the courage to choose rightly. History will remember what we did in this moment. So will the people whose lives depend on our answer.

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