Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr

The power of nonviolent action

Mary King

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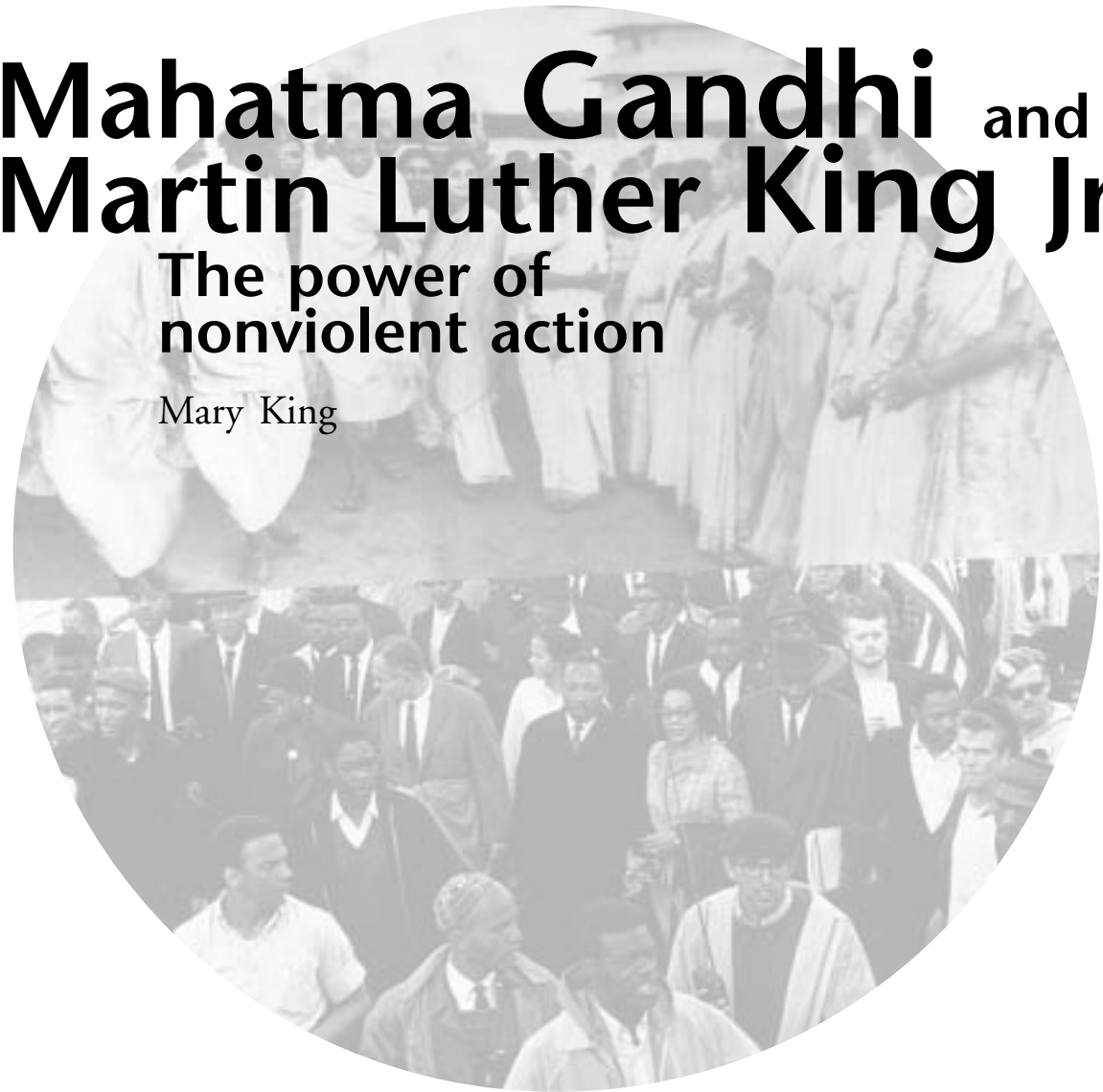

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Woodcut by the Bengali artist Nandlal Bose of Gandhi on the Salt March of 1930, the 241-mile march from Ahmedabad to the sea coast at Dandi, on the western coast of India.

Preface

Some time ago, when I asked Mary King to prepare this book as a UNESCO project, my overriding concern was to share the message of nonviolence with today's readers, particularly the young. Indeed, as a young woman, Mary King lived nonviolence in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Recent events around the world, as admirably documented here, show the continued relevance of nonviolence at the end of this the most violent century in human history.

The examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and of those who follow and adopt their teachings today, are crucial to UNESCO's constitutional commitment to build the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women everywhere. Where else but in our minds and hearts can we find the resourcefulness to break the cycle of war and violence that has characterized history until now – what I call the 'Culture of War' – and build a 'Culture of Peace'?

A culture of peace is anything but a culture of passivity. Nonviolence is a strategy for action, not inaction, and certainly not docility. It is forthright, courageous, disciplined, assertive and, as we all too often forget, remarkably successful. It is based on big ideas and overarching ethical imperatives communicated, for all to see, in everyday gestures: Gandhi walking to the sea and silently picking up a grain of sand, Rosa Parks staying seated on her Montgomery bus, Martin Luther King and thousands of others walking to work in the famous bus boycott. A culture of peace is an everyday, active commitment to free expression, to caring for our neighbors and sharing our ideals and dreams with them.

This is what Gandhi and King teach us. This is what their fate forces us to conclude: they were threats to social and political orders based on injustice, intolerance and violence. Their nonviolence and messages of freedom and love forced change, not only in external laws and systems of

governance, but in the minds of men and women. And their ideas drew strength from the very tragedy of their deaths.

UNESCO celebrates these two great figures who, in the clamor of our war-torn century, quietly spoke 'truth to power' calmly, bravely and effectively. For it is also true that this century has seen the birth of political nonviolence as a new force for change, for democracy, for justice and for peace.

When UNESCO's founders wrote of the need for the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind' in the pursuit of freedom, justice and democracy, they were offering the force of ideas against the idea of force. That is why it is so important to understand from this book that the Culture of Peace has a history and, most importantly, a future.

Federico Mayor
Director-General of UNESCO

Contents

In memory
of my father,
Luther Waddington King,
and
my mother,
Alba Irequi King

Acknowledgments

When I was a small child, Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at the Metropolitan-Duane United Methodist Church in New York City, where my father was minister at the time of the founding of the United Nations. She told the Manhattan congregation of her belief that, in the long run, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) might be the most important part of the United Nations system because of the scope and promise of its mission. The views of the former First Lady of the United States about the importance of UNESCO imprinted themselves on my mind. In the decades since its establishment on 4 November 1946, as UNESCO has worked to teach the global classroom about the urgency of tolerance and appreciation of differences, Eleanor Roosevelt's observation has proved to be prescient.

Therefore, when Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, suggested that I write this volume, I was delighted. He had read my book *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*, about my four years of work in that struggle, and then asked that I explore the remarkable accomplishments of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr and recent nonviolent movements. I should like to offer particular gratitude for Federico Mayor's vision. Yet he is not the only person at UNESCO who worked hard to help bring this project into being. Tom Forstenzer, in the Office of the Director-General, made the book possible. To Fernando Ainsa, and others whose labors in UNESCO Publishing have brought it into fruition, are extended my sincere thanks. Appreciation also goes to Solomon Hailu, in the Office of the Director-General, for his kind interest.

My association with the scholar who chose the quotations from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in Chapter Four has been most fulfilling. B. R. Nanda has spent most of his life as an historian writing about Gandhi. Despite the occasional breakdowns in the fax machines that connected my office in Washington, D.C., with his in New Delhi, India, he always responded

rapidly to my queries. I am particularly grateful to him for his review of the chapter on Gandhi and for his selection of the photographs of Gandhi. The copyright of Gandhi's writings rests with the Navajivan Trust in Ahmedabad, India. Jitendra Desai and the archivists at the trust have given generous permission for the use of the extracts from Gandhi's texts for this volume. Appreciation is extended to them for their cooperation.

Whenever asked, the Embassy of India helped communications between Washington and New Delhi. Nirupama Rao, now the Indian ambassador to Peru, was my initial contact, and she provided generous assistance. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, in his capacity as Minister for Information and Culture, has been most helpful in facilitating communications between the embassy and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

The historian Clayborne Carson, at Stanford University, has researched archives and collections in Atlanta, Boston and Stanford to assemble the quotations from Martin Luther King Jr. Dr Carson and his staff at the Martin Luther King Jr Papers Project worked diligently and cooperatively to support the evolution of this project, and have provided some rare excerpts for Chapter Four.

The administrators of the estate of Martin Luther King Jr gave permission to include King's writings and the sermon in Appendix 2, for which gratitude is extended.

I especially acknowledge the tireless contributions of Mary Kathryn (Van Der Ziel) Lundregan, who served as my research assistant. Her work has been indispensable in the preparation of this volume. She located materials that often proved difficult to find, and her interest, curiosity, aptitude and diligence reinforced my energies.

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The photographs of Gandhi have been generously provided by the Government of India. The photographs of Martin Luther King Jr come primarily from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., courtesy of the Martin Luther King Collection in the Prints and Photographs Division. The photographer Jay Leviton graciously gave permission to use his remarkable and rare photograph of a mass meeting from the Montgomery bus boycott and has my great appreciation. The photographer Matt Herron – with whom I worked during the 1960s civil rights movement – has my thanks for use of his photograph taken at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery march. Professor Geir Lundestad, Executive Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway, was most generous in providing photographs of Lech Walesa and Rigoberta Menchú taken at the Institute. Special acknowledgement is extended to Dr Jara David-Moserová, Vice President of the Czech parliament, and to the Czech photographers K. Cudlín and Pavel Vácha, for their generosity in providing noteworthy photographs from the 'Velvet Revolution'. I extend particularly warm appreciation to the photographer Leslie Kean for the photographs of Aung San Suu Kyi and to the Burma Project USA in Mill Valley, California. They were most generous with their help, as was Mary Pack of *Burma Debate*.

I should like to recognize the efforts of Rochelle Roca Hachem, who did so much to facilitate the flow of information and official papers within UNESCO, and also between Paris and my office. Thanks also are due to Rosemary Wiltshire for her help in Paris.

My late father, the Reverend Dr Luther Waddington King (who is not related to Martin Luther King Jr) showed great patience as a scholar in reviewing the manuscript. My husband, Peter Geoffrey Bourne, deserves my immeasurable thanks for his moral support and encouragement.

Among the subjects of this book whom I have been privileged to have known is the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr, alongside whom I worked during the civil rights movement for four years, while a young staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Mahatma Gandhi died soon after Eleanor Roosevelt spoke about UNESCO at my father's church, and I thus have no firsthand knowledge of him – as would be helpful in evaluating different accounts.

Despite the admirable aid furnished by scholars and others in my research, and in spite of my own efforts at precision in scholarship, this project has broad parameters, and it is possible that I have in some instances erred. If so, the mistakes are my responsibility alone, and I extend my most sincere apologies.

Mary Elizabeth King

A note about jiu-jitsu

Much of the skepticism that results from describing nonviolent direct action as something metaphysical could be dispelled if the way it works were more broadly understood.

At the heart of how nonviolent resistance operates is a process called 'jiu-jitsu'. The term is borrowed from the ancient Japanese martial art, a system of wrestling based on the knowledge of balance and how to use such understanding to overcome an opponent's sense of equilibrium.

Briefly stated, by deliberately refusing to meet violence with violence, and by sustaining nonviolent behavior despite repression, a protagonist throws an opponent off balance. As the participants in a nonviolent campaign refuse to reciprocate their adversary's violence, the attacker becomes shaken by the sight of the suffering that has been caused and the refusal of the protagonists to respond with violence. The adversary becomes unsure of how to respond. The sympathies of the police or troops often begin to flow toward the nonviolent protagonists.

> As cruelties to nonviolent people increase, the opponent's regime may appear more despicable, and sympathy and support for the nonviolent side may increase. The general population may become more alienated from the opponent and more likely to join the resistance.[1]

Meanwhile, the proponents of nonviolence maintain discipline and gain self-assurance. They cannot use violence or they will add fuel to their opponent's determination, give a pretext for harsher crackdowns, while weakening themselves. Even if brutal repression results, the nonviolent group may still move toward a solution.

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1. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 2: *The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), p. 113.

The more violent the opponent, the less likely it is that its forces will be able to deal with the type of power exercised by the nonviolent group. Gandhi depicted this as what happens when a man violently strikes water with his sword. The man's arm is dislocated.[2] Machiavelli also grasped this principle: when a ruler is opposed by the populace, and attempts to secure his position through brutality, 'the greater his cruelty, the weaker does his regime become'.[3] It is this ability of nonviolent resistance to cause or intensify internal problems for the opponent that places nonviolent action in a special category among the techniques of struggle.[4] Disagreement by the populace with the brutal measures witnessed 'turns on itself', and the conflict shifts. It becomes, instead, an internal dispute with the regime or adversary over its infliction of violence on unarmed peaceful protesters. Richard Gregg, among Gandhi's most insightful interpreters, calls this phenomenon 'moral jiu-jitsu'. Gene Sharp, a leading theoretician in the field of nonviolent resistance, terms it 'political jiu-jitsu'. Either way, it is an adroit description of how the use of brutality against a nonviolent group, rather than breaking the group's determination, can actually result in sympathy.

Writing in 1935, basing his thought on intensive exposure to Gandhi's campaigns in India, Gregg explains jiu-jitsu by describing how the violence of the adversary undermines the user:

> Prolonged anger is very exhausting. . . . It consumes energy very rapidly. . . . The energy of the assailant is reverted and used up against himself. The steadfast appeals of an individual nonviolent resister work in the personality of the violent attacker. . . . The attacker's personality is divided. . . . If there are onlookers, the assailant soon loses still more poise. . . . The disadvantage of the attacker increases by reason of a further loss of inner assurance. . . . He dimly realizes the courage of the nonviolent opponent is higher than mere physical bravery or recklessness.[5]

With persistence, and particularly if no breach occurs in the nonviolent regimen, the nonviolent activists can make gains without resorting to violence. Wonder is often aroused and, as the adversary's anger, fear, dread or pride are frequently dispelled, the cruelty of the attacker may be lessened.[6] The nonviolent protagonist instead possesses superior poise and power for a number of reasons, as noted by Gregg:

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2. Ibid.
3. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 3: *The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), pp. 680, 681.
4. Ibid., p. 678.
5. Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), pp. 45, 46.
6. Ibid., p. 48.

He has taken the moral initiative. His conduct is new, unexpected, and unpredictable to the person habituated by violence. Second, he is not surprised. He knows . . . how to control the process. Third, his self-control and lack of anger conserve his energy. . . . To be willing to suffer and die for a cause is an incontestable proof of sincere belief. . . . The victim's refusal to use violence indicates his respect for the personality and moral integrity of the assailant. . . . This respect, shown by the nonviolent resister, gradually tends to put his attacker to shame and to enhance the respect of any onlookers toward the former.[7]

The changes induced through jiu-jitsu are not operating in isolation and are complementary to other political, social, economic and psychological alterations.[8] If the defiance and solidarity are sufficiently broad, it can be impossible to crush the nonviolent movement.

7. Ibid., pp. 46, 47.
8. Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 3: *The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action*, op. cit., p. 696.

Introduction

Nonviolent direct action has been used throughout the twentieth century as a means of projecting immense political power. It has been employed to secure independence, establish rights, open up closed systems, prevent military coups d'état, resist military occupations, and create new democracies or preserve old ones. Whether under communism, totalitarian dictatorships or democracies, nonviolent methods are productive. In mountain highlands, peasant villages, urban shipyards or capital cities, results can be seen. Faith may be involved in some struggles, but religious motivation is not necessarily required. Nonviolent resistance can function not only in Hindu or Christian contexts, as is widely presumed, but also in Buddhist, Islamic or other cultures.

During the last decade in particular, nonviolent resistance has been revived as an effective method for channeling the energy of the human race toward achieving humanitarian goals: The 1980s saw successful movements of 'people power' at work in the Baltic States; Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and what is now the Czech Republic in Eastern Europe; the former Soviet Union; Burma (now named Myanmar); Guatemala; South Africa; the Philippines; and elsewhere around the globe. These struggles were productive against heavily armed military regimes or seemingly invincible internal security systems. They won revolutions without bloodshed. Exertions requiring massive feats of organizing by civilians, they often resulted in prolonged periods of duress. Even where such sweeping nonviolent currents did not dislodge tyrannies, they were often able to lay bare the nature of a regime's repression.

Despite numerous examples of success, popular movements are not, of course, victorious in every instance. Some intense conflicts involved great suffering and loss of life, through no fault of the nonviolent protagonists. Mobilizations sometimes lead only to partial results. The student nonviolent movement in China was suppressed by gunfire in Tiananmen Square on 3/4 June 1989, and is now viewed as a warning of how nonviolent protagonists

can miscalculate. The Burmese prodemocracy movement, led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, is still attempting to recover from being smashed by the Myanmar military regime. After the National League for Democracy won a majority of seats in the national assembly in the 27 May 1990 general elections, the authorities, instead of recognizing the results, imprisoned scores of the league's supporters and leaders, and the movement's elected representatives were never allowed to occupy the parliamentary seats they had won at the polls.

Various uses of nonviolent tools

Different goals have been met through the use of nonviolent action, including the achievement of national independence, promotion of reform within governments, resolution of problems at the community level, grand-scale social alterations, and even national defense.

Conflict resolution

Nonviolence is increasingly used to solve problems or resolve conflicts within systems of government. Trade unions advancing the cause of workers' rights have used nonviolent sanctions with great success. Mediation and riot prevention have benefited from the introduction of tactics often used in nonviolent action. Neighborhood disputes and community arguments are better resolved when nonviolent methods are consciously used. Police forces are increasingly turning to seasoned trainers of nonviolence to teach recruits nonviolent methods for stopping fights and crowd control.

Social justice and reform

While seeking stability, justice or reform, nonviolent strategies accelerate the search for social equity. With creative nonviolent action, the unrepresented have taken their cases to centers of state power to gain recognition. Nonviolent techniques have also been employed to fight against the careless handling and continued manufacture of toxic wastes and on behalf of environmental cleanup.

National defense

Where civilians resist nonviolently together, subjugation by an invading or occupying army can be made extremely difficult, if not impossible. A civilian society that is prepared for a role in defending itself may be able to prevent war or immobilize an external threat. The Baltic States are working to implement programs of civilian defense in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Sweden, which have made efforts toward instituting this form of defense.[1]

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1. Gene Sharp, with the assistance of Bruce Jenkins, *Self-Reliant Defense without Bankruptcy or War: Considerations for the Baltics, East Central Europe, and Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1992), pp. 59–61 (monograph).

Promising themselves and their neighbors that they will use nonmilitary means of struggle in a form complementary to traditional defense, they are seeking to dissuade attacks, prevent them, and promote mutual assistance.[2]

A readied citizenry can deter internal usurpations, much as it can international aggression. Either way, civilian-based defense is grounded in the principle that resistance capacity should be placed in the hands of the people to help minimize or supplement a military capability that could itself threaten democracy and strain resources.[3] Such an approach requires broad agreement and a national decision, because a large percentage of the population must be trained in a disciplined capacity. Among the objectives are for the attacked society to become ungovernable by aggressors, to resist the intrusion of unwanted forces over the populace and to raise the costs of hostile rule. Study of this dimension of nonviolent struggle is still in its infancy. Although the extensive armed resistance and sabotage used against Hitler is widely known, significant *unarmed* strategies were also effectively employed against invading Nazi forces. New documentation details the nonviolent resistance of teachers and church leaders in Norway, underground organizing by the physicians of the Netherlands, broad resistance in Poland, including daring efforts by Polish academicians and teachers, extensive activities of Czech students and professors, strikes and demonstrations by industrial workers and miners in Belgium and France, and resistance efforts in the Protestant Church in Germany.[4] Scholars do not yet have a complete understanding of the historic phases when nonviolent resistance might have halted Nazism because such research is in a formative stage. As other moments in history are more deeply investigated, they, too, may yield further insights into the political, social, economic and psychological tools that may be used to make impossible the consolidation of external rule.

Self-rule, nation-building and protection of democracy

The nonviolent revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, from 1989 to 1991, led one observer to conclude, 'Democracy may be obtained and defended as much by civil resistance as by other means.'[5] Peace and security demand the teaching of the history and practice of nonviolence. If communities learn how to fight for justice, human rights and democracy

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2. Johan Jørgen Holst, *Civilian-Based Defense in a New Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1990), p. 12. (Monograph Series, 2.)
3. Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1993), p. 70 (monograph); also see Gene Sharp, *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).
4. See Jacques Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939–1943* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993).
5. Adam Roberts, *Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1991), p. 38. (Monograph Series, 4.)

without bloodshed, their resulting comprehension can influence the growth of new social, political and economic institutions, and how such entities are to be shaped for governance. The expectations of a people can be affected by whether their way of life is based on nonviolent norms.

Two giants of nonviolent struggle

In the twentieth century, the practice of nonviolence is most vividly associated with two outstanding figures. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi led what was essentially a liberation movement to expel the British from India through nonviolent resistance, while also using nonviolent techniques to address structural violence – the violence caused by poverty, colonialism and caste. The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr, the symbolic leader of the American civil rights movement, used nonviolent struggle as a form of social protest and mobilization for legal reforms. Less known is an array of nonviolent resisters in the early twentieth century, stretching back into the nineteenth century, and thence to millennia before. Gandhi himself said that nonviolent direct action is 'as ancient as the hills'.

Both Gandhi and King defy simplistic interpretations or quick characterizations. Their uniqueness suggests that no particular mold shapes great leaders of nonviolent movements. They arose from different cultures, religions and epochs, yet they both believed that nonviolent approaches can be adopted by anyone with the will and desire for positive social change. Both believed in nonviolence as a universal principle and a transcendent value, yet they understood that not everyone could make their commitment. They knew that many of their adherents had previously used violence. Although they are often described as visionary, far more consequential is how intensely practical they were. In their respective struggles, they wanted to minimize anything negative and maximize the chances of success. Nonviolent behavior was, for both of them, a means of transforming relationships and creating peaceful transitions of power. No religious or spiritual vows were required by either man as a condition of participation and, in fact, they learned through their own endeavors that nonviolent methods were effective whether religiously motivated or not. Neither sought sainthood or martyrdom.

Gandhi was often torn between different paths, his thinking was never static, and his views were not simplistic. His campaigns span the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the years following the Second World War, an epoch of momentous worldwide change. He was a pioneer in leading eight militant struggles during the course of that time: against racism, against colonialism, against the caste system, for popular democratic participation, against economic exploitation, against the degradation of women, against religious and ethnic supremacy, and on behalf of nonviolent methods for social and political transformations. Because of the breadth of his concerns, there is, in a sense, a different Gandhi for

each reader. The taking of initiative and action were more important to Gandhi than the written word, although he was deft at shaping public opinion through his writings. Having shown amazing temerity during the nearly eight decades that he lived, it is difficult to keep in mind that leadership did not come easily to him. He started his adult life suffering from an overpowering shyness that interfered with his ability to speak publicly, even in small gatherings.

Nor did Martin Luther King arrive at leadership easily. He was a reluctant leader. A Baptist minister who sought to serve his congregation, he did not seek the mantle of leadership that was wrapped about his shoulders by the black people of Montgomery, Alabama. Were he alive today, he would probably not recognize some descriptions of himself. The civil rights struggle in the Southern United States was genuinely a mass movement; King would have shied from the notion of a single leader of a phenomenon diversified into many local movements, each with its own leaders, many of them women who were very poor and lacking formal education. Yet, with his eloquence and ability to reach both the learned and the untutored through his expansive and gifted preaching and oration, he came to personify a complex, unwieldy and erratic movement that was rarely able to plan anything more than a few weeks in advance.

Much as Gandhi invoked classical egalitarian traditions in Hindu religious thought in his fight against the caste system, so, too, Martin Luther King summoned the traditions of resistance in the African-American Protestant Church, with its theology of freedom welded in the furnaces of slavery. Both figures defied conventional labels or categories. Gandhi's many successes in major struggles in India depended on the coincidence of his being both deeply religious and skilled as a politician and communicator. It is said that he once remarked, 'People describe me as a saint trying to be a politician, but the truth is the other way around.'[6]

Martin Luther King was venerated for his cadenced blending of a passionate African-American gospel with a muscular and contemporary political message. Both were intertwined in his sonorous preaching. He was able to turn the deeply rooted faith of the black community toward social and political goals by 'melding the image of Gandhi and the image of the Negro preacher', overlaying it with biblical symbols that 'bypassed cerebral centers and exploded in the well of the Negro psyche'.[7] A person with distinct powers of concentration, he also possessed astute negotiating skills. He was a brilliant interlocutor in the corridors of national power and a

6. Homer A. Jack (ed.), 'Introduction', *The Gandhi Reader: A Source Book of His Life and Writings* (New York: AMS Press, 1956), p. viii.

7. Lerone Bennett Jr, *What Manner of Man* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), p. 72.

persuasive force in the editorial rooms of the major newspapers and television networks.

In some ways the road taken by each of these extraordinary men to reach a commitment to nonviolence was similar. They both trained themselves in principled nonviolence and adopted it as a creed for living. Once embarked on the path to such an ethical position, however, they also remained convinced that nonviolent struggle was the most practical way of wielding power while minimizing harm. Both led by example. Preaching and living the principles of tolerance and dialogue, both fell to the bullets of assassins. Both were among the greatest contributors to the twentieth century and progenitors of the twenty-first.

As long as there is strife, hostilities, ethnic cleansing, religious unrest, internal conflicts and threats of military occupation, people will turn to Gandhi. His usefulness will not end unless conflict ceases. As long as injustice, racism and oppression of minorities persist, King's 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' will be read. Gandhi and King prepared the way for the continuing quest. The potency of present-day movements that have been directly or indirectly influenced by them are the best proof that they still speak to us.

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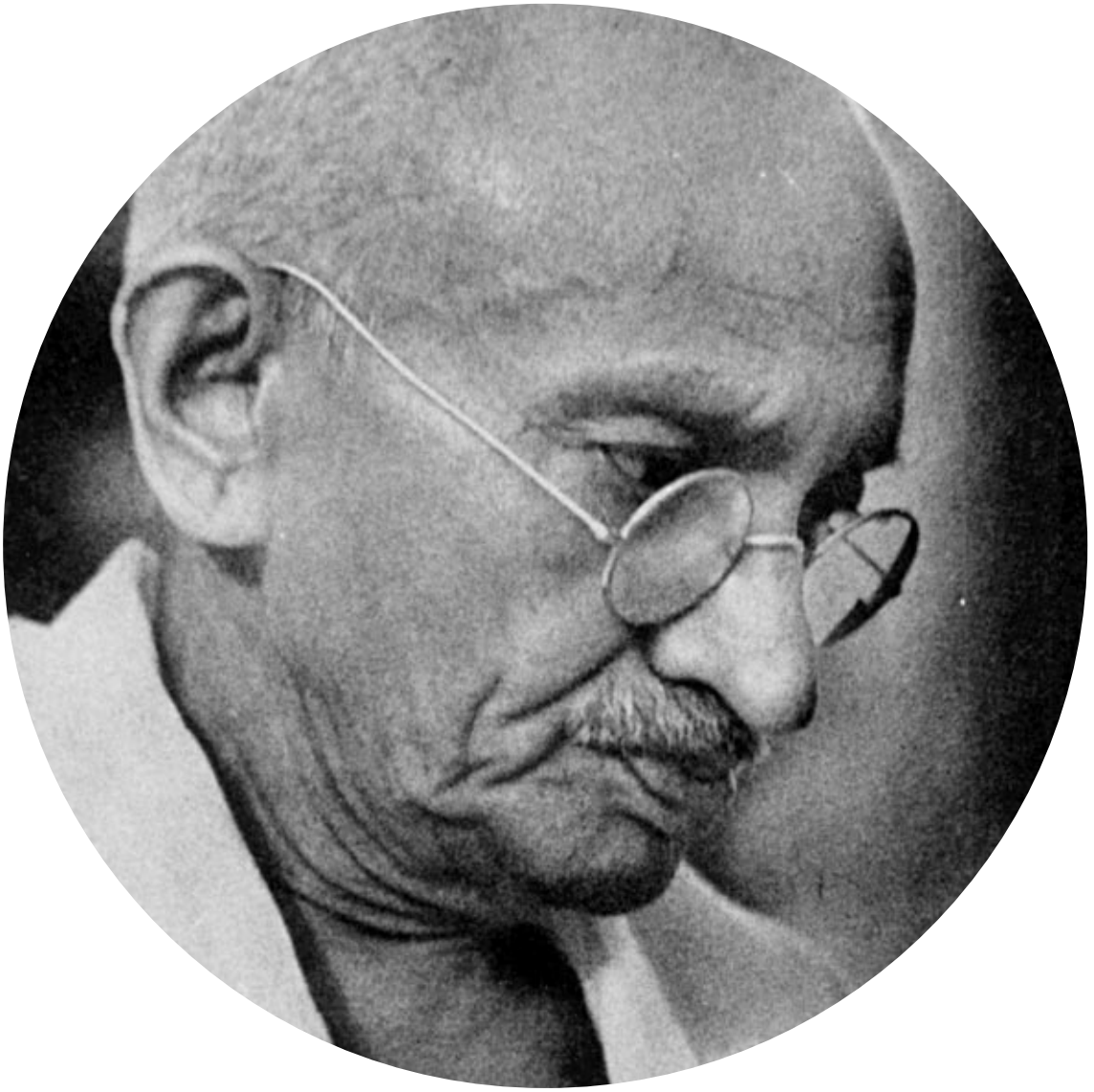
Chapter One

Confronting power itself: Mahatma Gandhi's campaigns and the power of truth

You must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. . . . You can see that the influence of these men has sustained us after they have passed away.

Gandhi,
in an interview with Nirmal Kumar Bose,
Hindustan Times, 17 October 1935



A kind of power

The struggle led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi against British rule in India sparked movements, some of them nonviolent, that continue to this day. It was not the first nonviolent struggle in history – far from it – but it was the most influential, helping to set off the wave of decolonization in the middle of the twentieth century. Despite the numbers of confrontations and mass movements that have arisen since, this encounter of a people with an imperial system forms the basis of the world's experience with nonviolent struggle in the twentieth century. The American civil rights movement just after mid-century borrowed directly from Gandhi's example, campaigns, thinking, and writings earlier in the century. And by 1989, nonviolent rebellions in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, South-East Asia, Latin America and elsewhere in the world were directly or indirectly influenced by Gandhi's profound insights into the power that resides in people. Although Gandhi was not the first exponent of 'people power', he was the most influential exemplar of what Václav Havel calls the 'power of the powerless'.[1]

The Mahatma ('great souled') and other leaders surmounted the structural violence of hunger and poverty – maintained in India through the economic and military might of a vast colonial empire – and succeeded in lifting foreign dominance through the use of an unusual arsenal of weapons. The armory that would subsequently catch the imagination and release hidden potency all over the world, however, did not consist of violent tools.

For Gandhi, nonviolence was 'Truth-creating', and he intended to replace violence with Truth. Truth, to him, could never fade or disappear, for Truth was God. At the end of his autobiography, he states, 'there is no

1. Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in Jan Vladislav (ed.), *Living in Truth* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989; essay originally written in October 1978), pp. 36–122.

other God than Truth'.[2] This is not a play on words, but an attempt to explain a Hindu synthesis: God, Truth and Love to Gandhi were all-pervasive, penetrating everything, and these are one. For Westerners, Truth might be what can be quantified, isolated or substantiated. Truth or God, for Gandhi, was 'the search for realizing the truth of human unity'.[3] Gandhi's determination to 'hold on to Truth' was, therefore, a familiar concept for his audience, where folklore, song and drama emphasized the recognition of Truth or God as the fulfillment for which millions yearned.

Gandhi's particular claim was that he could demonstrate a way to discover Truth by taking action in society. In other words, he sought God through action. Nonviolence was the force created from Truth and Love. Truth excluded the use of violence because human beings, he felt, were incapable of knowing absolute Truth and, therefore, were not competent to punish.[4] Gandhi thought Love was stronger than anger or fear because it was more intelligent and led to conflict-resolution rather than to destructiveness. Whatever the original grievance, Gandhi believed that retaliatory or vindictive force provoked counter-retaliation and he was, therefore, determined to enlarge whatever areas of agreement were shared between opponents. He sought to settle conflicts through persuasion and the minimizing of harm. He believed that a contest with any structure, even if military, should have a constructive quality and be carried out in favor of the human beings involved.[5] Rather than fracture the opponent's will he wanted to modify it.

Gandhi possessed penetrating psychological insights long in advance of the pioneering development of the sciences of human behavior that would shape so much of twentieth-century thought in the Western world. One of his lasting discernments was on the need to fight the aggression, not the aggressor.[6] For Gandhi, it was acceptable to hate the sin but not the sinner, or to hate suppression but not the suppressor; he thought that the failure to understand this simple precept was what allowed the 'poison of hatred' to spread.[7] The ability to differentiate between the individuals who were

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2. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. from Gujarati by Mahadev Desai, with a foreword by Sissela Bok (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1940; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p. 503. In 1925, at the age of 56, Gandhi began writing his autobiography and continued it, in 1926, at the Sabarmati ashram.
3. Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 109.
4. Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), p. 241.
5. See Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, op. cit., pp. 15–35.
6. Arne Naess, *Gandhi and Group Conflict: An Exploration of Satyagraha* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget/Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities, 1974), p. 127.
7. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 276.

involved and the system that they administered or represented was crucial for Gandhi, because it allowed for conflict to be conducted on a depersonalized basis without the corrosive effects that result from personal animosity or hostility. Actions that resulted in counter-hatred, he believed, only increased and deepened hatred.

To express his ideas, Gandhi needed a new vocabulary. Two concepts that are identified with him – *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* – require explanation in order to understand Gandhi's thinking and his influence on other movements (see the Glossary at the end of this book). To express the idea of victory over violence, Gandhi turned to Jainism – originally a reforming sect of Hinduism, and considered by those who follow it to be a faith – in which the central concept is one of total renunciation of violence in word, thought and deed.[8] Jainism stands out because of its strict advocacy of nonviolence toward all living beings.[9] The founder of Jainism, Mahavira, was born into an ancient court of India in approximately 600 B.C., but rejected his princely status and chose instead to make his life a long ascetic journey. He traveled through the villages and central plains of India seeking release from the transmigration of souls, or the cyclical passage from birth to death and rebirth of those who accept the doctrine of reincarnation. Mahavira had two guiding principles: saving one's soul from evil could come about only through a most severe asceticism, turning away from the things of this world and toward activity of the mind and spirit, and that the purity of one's soul required practicing *ahimsa*, or noninjury to all living beings. It is said that Mahavira carried everywhere with him a soft broom so that he could sweep his path clear of insects to avoid stepping on them. The same broom bared the ground before he slept, and he accepted into his begging bowl only whatever food was left over from others. The first vow of a Jain monk pertains to *ahimsa*:

> I renounce all killing of living beings, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself kill living beings nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live I confess, and blame, and exempt myself of these sins, in mind, speech, and body.[10]

Jain philosophy considers all knowledge to be relative, with every question answerable by both yes and no. The Jain belief in the fallacy of all human thought is shown by the ancient story of the six blind men who place their hands on an elephant, with one concluding that it was like a fan, the other that it was a rope, another saying it was a snake, and so on.[11]

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8. Kenneth Morgan, *The Religion of the Hindus* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1953), pp. 31, 32.
9. A. C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion: A Short Outline* (Harmondsworth (United Kingdom): Penguin, 1950), p. 156.
10. John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 117, 118.
11. Ibid., p. 122.

From early childhood, Gandhi was influenced by Jainism.[12] He was particularly inspired by a Jain savant named Raychandbhai (or more properly Rajchandra), about whom Gandhi wrote a short chapter in his autobiography, praising his purity of character and desire for self-realization. Raychandbhai became a spiritual guide for Gandhi, who was deeply impressed by his mentor's passion to see God face to face. Partly because of Raychandbhai's influence on his life and partly because Jainism was so prevalent in Gujarat, where Gandhi grew up, Gandhi adopted the fundamental concept of Jain philosophy, *ahimsa*, to mean a kind of power whose essence is nonviolence. *Ahimsa* suffused Gujarat's religious and cultural milieu, but it was Gandhi who applied it to the social and political spheres of life, molding the idea into a tool of nonviolent action to effect change.[13] Embedded in its meaning of harmlessness, noncoercion and renunciation of any intent to injure – including abstinence from thoughts or words that might hurt – is the idea of mutuality. Mutual change can bring mutual benefits and responsibilities, thus serving as a means of accomplishing an end without injury to anyone.

Without grasping *satyagraha*, one cannot appreciate the weight of Gandhi's impact on movements today that are profoundly influenced by his methods of nonviolent resistance. Simply finding the right word was, for Gandhi, a task not so easily accomplished. The term *passive resistance* – which Gandhi had originally been using to describe the technique for practicing *ahimsa* – had drawbacks. He felt that the term was not only incomplete, but conveyed the wrong impression: nonviolent resistance is an active, not a passive force. Even as Gandhi was using the term 'passive resistance', he was uncomfortable with its connotations, as he later clarified:

> When in a meeting with Europeans I found that the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle.[14]

Ingeniously, Gandhi offered a small prize through his journal in South Africa, *Indian Opinion*, for the best suggestion of a single word to describe his principles of Truth and Love as the forces of power and change. The winning entry of *sadagraha*, or 'firmness in good conduct', was altered by Gandhi to *satyagraha*, literally meaning 'holding onto Truth', 'firmness in Truth', a 'relentless search for Truth'.[15] *Satyagraha* was a means of converting

12. Mircea Eliade, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan/Free Press, 1987), p. 482.
13. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 112.
14. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 318.
15. B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography* (Delhi:Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 95.

the power in nonviolence, or *ahimsa*, into political action.[16] In the decades since Gandhi, *satyagraha* has been widely translated as 'truth force'. Yet the term *force* might also be construed to imply violence, which he did not mean to suggest. For the modern reader, *satyagraha* may be best understood as meaning 'the power of Truth' – a concept equivalent to nonviolent direct action or nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi did not want this new form of revolutionary resistance to be merely tactical and often remarked on the inner requirements for *satyagraha*:

> Experience has taught me that civility is the most difficult part of Satyagraha. Civility does not here mean the mere outward gentleness of speech cultivated for the occasion, but an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good. These should show themselves in every act of a Satyagrahi [or person who accepted these precepts].[17]

The motive within each *satyagrahi* was seen as essential to the success of nonviolent struggle and, therefore, the quest for Truth in *satyagraha* blended the mind, body and soul for the attainment of personal and, ultimately, social transformation. *Satyagraha* was thus intended to be a multidimensional ideal that pertained to all aspects of human life and activity. While *ahimsa* constituted the basis of Gandhi's search for Truth, *satyagraha* was the tool by which to achieve it. Gandhi's *satyagraha* combined principled nonviolence with shrewd techniques of resistance to subjugation.[18] In this sense, Gandhi showed that he was a superb strategist.

Satyagraha was a union of the ethical and the practical in action because of Gandhi's conviction that moral principles have no meaning unless they guide the daily endeavors of individuals.[19] While conventional warfare relies on breaking the will of one's opponent through the infliction of suffering, Gandhi turned this notion on its head. He conceived intentional self-suffering to be a formal declaration against the grievance, policy, wrong, law or military occupation. He based his theory on the idea that by inviting suffering from one's adversary – pain greater than the original grievance – the conscious inflicting of suffering on oneself becomes a source of power as it confounds the foe. By disrupting the morale of the antagonist through voluntarily accepting the distress and tribulation that have been imposed, self-sacrifice becomes a form of power operating as if it were an engine thrown into reverse gear.[20] Among all of Gandhi's insights into the nature

16. Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 8.
17. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 437.
18. Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 220–1.
19. Ibid., p. 288.
20. Krishnalal Shridharani, *War without Violence* (Chowpatty/Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), p. 263.

of power – including nonviolence, Truth and self-suffering – perhaps the most difficult to fathom has been the endurance of suffering by the *satyagrahi*. As he envisioned it, such a sacrifice 'cuts through the rationalized defenses of the opponent'.[21]

Gandhi emphasized personal commitment as being necessary to bring about change on a larger scale. This concept is related to Gandhi's belief that the means must be as pure as the end. For Gandhi, the means and the ends were forever linked: 'The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.'[22] In a complete rejection of age-old assumptions that good ends can justify bad means, Gandhi actually spurned any notion of a distinction between means and ends. He believed that if one wanted a certain state of affairs, the process should embody the ends, and the steps to achieve it should be ones of implementing the goal. The means and ends may be drawn out over time but cannot be separated from each other. We might have to use trial and error to find a truthful course, in Gandhi's eyes, but we should endeavor from the first step to act consistently with our goal; our actions should thus reveal our ultimate purpose.[23] His rejection of a difference between means and ends can be looked at as an understanding that if practicing the goal today does not result in the desired effect later on, the goal has at least been lived if only for a brief moment. When the means are violent, however, the goal has never been realized, not even for an instant.

We should not overlook the fact that Gandhi championed *satyagraha* not only because of its moral implications and implicit personal mandate but, rather, because he considered *satyagraha* to be the most practical and effective option for achieving a goal. He was, at heart, as practical as he was idealistic. Gandhi considered his campaigns to be experiments; he subtitled his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. A virtually inexhaustible array of mass action was available, in Gandhi's eyes; indeed, in the years since, well over 200 different methods have been identified.[24] Furthermore, Gandhi believed that any person could grasp the meaning of nonviolence.

The teachings of Gandhi emphasize his belief that human beings have at their disposal the power to settle group conflicts without violence – which sounds simple. Still, it is worth remembering that in many battles,

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21. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 228.
22. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*, edited by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1938), p. 64.
23. Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyapith/Peace Research Centre, 1992), pp. 78, 79.
24. See Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3 vols. (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

even where it seems there is vituperative disagreement, both sides are often operating on a foundation which holds that violence is a reasonable method of procedure.[25] Had Gandhi simply said 'no violence' and advocated abstinence from anything violent, it would have rendered him ineffective. He would have been called foolishly lacking in imagination. Instead, he offered something else, a substitute: a theory about the use of power and the methods for its use. What made Gandhi's core conviction so original and so lasting in its impact was that he foresaw nonviolent struggle as a practical alternative for all persons to use and its greater reliability in the end. Gandhi accepted the fact that struggle presupposes conflict. While his remarkable contribution came from his perspective on power, he also knew that the exploration of undisclosed potency in the use of nonviolent action was just beginning:

> The way of violence is old and established. It is not so difficult to do research in it. The way of non-violence is new. The science of non-violence is yet taking shape. We are still not conversant with all its aspects. There is a wide scope for research and experiment in this field. You can apply all your talents to it.[26]

As much as his essential being was shaped by Hinduism, Gandhi was also influenced by Christianity. He was captivated by the Christian contribution of Love to the world of thought, particularly as represented by the New Testament and the Sermon on the Mount, the latter rendered as it was through the sermon's advocacy of active Love. Well read in many philosophies and theologies, at least 253 books have been identified as works specifically studied by Gandhi during his lifetime.[27] This probably represents a partial count. Gandhi constantly adapted what he learned from the diverse sources that he sought out with the result that he came to an understanding of nonviolence that was universal and richly humanistic. As he matured, his worldview increasingly blended both East and West, tradition and innovation.

Gandhi's life could be said to have been one grand effort to persuade people to change: he sought to coax the white South Africans to alter their stance, the Indians to stand up and fight back, and the British to modify their control.[28] Although he was always aware of the spiritual dimension,

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25. Richard B. Gregg, *The Psychology and Strategy of Gandhi's Nonviolent Resistance*, edited by Charles A. Barker (Madras: S. Ganesan Publishers, 1929; repr., New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), p. 41.
26. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by K. Swaminathan, 100 vols. (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958–94), Vol. 71, 1978, pp. 263, 264. (Hereafter referred to as *CWMG*.)
27. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., pp. 19, 210 note.
28. Harris Wofford, in an interview with the author, Washington, D.C., 5 May 1995.

he was also grounded in a fundamental understanding of temporal power. While *ahimsa* was part of the Hindu religious tradition, Gandhi's concept of nonviolent struggle did not always resonate with Muslims. As the historian B. R. Nanda has pointed out, they sometimes interpreted it as cowardice or lack of manliness.[29] Gandhi, of course, understood nonviolent struggle to be quite the opposite – the expression of strength. In 1920, he wrote an article called 'The Doctrine of the Sword':

> I do believe that when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. . . . I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honor than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless victim to her own dishonor. But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. . . . Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.[30]

Any ruling power needs to obtain cooperation, whether willing or coerced, from its subject population. If the people themselves were to stop participating in the unspoken contract by which they are ruled, Gandhi knew, the power of the reigning government would be diminished.[31] In the face of organized withdrawal of consent or obedience, it might even collapse.

Influences on Gandhi

The young Gandhi grew to manhood in the state of Gujarat, where the impact of the West was more remote than in the administrative centers of British imperialism at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The saints and values of devotional Hinduism shaped his consciousness and reinforced his adoption of *ahimsa*. Hinduism is more than a religion. It is a belief system and a way of life; indeed, Gandhi's very openness to the religious sensitivities of others may be attributable to a fundamental Hindu outlook. While the Bhagavad Gita was of particular importance to him as a young law student in London – enduring the cultural and climatic coldness of Britain – and exercised perhaps the strongest influence on his life, Gandhi read widely and incorporated ideas from many sources, combining them with an originality of thinking that remains spellbinding.

Gandhi often acknowledged his indebtedness to certain key thinkers, one of whom was John Ruskin. Born in 1820 to Scottish parents, Ruskin was one of the most acclaimed art critics of his day, and his excursions

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29. B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi: Pan-Islamism, Imperialism, and Nationalism in India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 288.
30. *Young India*, 11 August 1920.
31. See Éstienne de la Boétie, 'Discours de la servitude volontaire', *Œuvres complètes d'Éstienne de la Boétie* (Paris: J. Rouam & Cie, 1892); Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, op. cit., p. 11.

from art to write on other topics were also well received. Perhaps best known was his treatise on political economy, *Unto This Last*, which appeared in 1860, and was admired by Gandhi. Indeed, Gandhi translated *Unto This Last* into his native Gujarati in 1908 and entitled it *Sarvodaya*, or 'The Welfare of All'. In Ruskin's work, Gandhi saw reflected as if in a mirror his own beliefs and concerns regarding the problems of structural violence. The primary thrust of Ruskin's endeavor was that capitalism and most economic theories saw human beings as fundamentally selfish and acting only in self-interest.[32] Ruskin argued that the only true wealth was life itself, and he encouraged a simpler life, one that refused both competition and misery. Gandhi perceived in Ruskin the dignity of work, whether manual or intellectual. He interpreted Ruskin to mean that the only good economy is one that leads to the good of all.[33] As a result, Gandhi began experiments with self-reliance in the form of living in a communal settlement, or ashram.[34] One such farm was called Phoenix, near Durban.

Gandhi's aspiration to what he called 'living in Truth' was also influenced by the Russian novelist Count Leo Tolstoy. Gandhi named one of his ashram experiments twenty-one miles from Johannesburg 'Tolstoy Farm'. So impressed was he by Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You* that he said it had left him overwhelmed. The count's emphasis on love and compassion confirmed Gandhi's beliefs in nonviolence and truth during a period of introspection and skepticism. Tolstoy considered wrong and unethical any power based on violence and believed that resisting evil through bloodshed was corrupt because it had the effect of breeding hatred and fear. Tolstoy's assurance that spiritual force is the only force by which progress can be made deeply influenced Gandhi's application of nonviolence to social problems. His writing affected Gandhi so greatly that he and the Russian began writing letters to each other, although they never actually met. These letters 'give an impression of gratitude and reverence by the young Indian on the threshold of his career and delightful surprise by the aged Tolstoy already under the shadow of domestic tragedy and death'.[35]

Raychandbhai, Ruskin and Tolstoy are singled out by Gandhi for mention in his autobiography as the three 'moderns' who particularly captivated him. In addition, two others who had an impact on him were G. K. Gokhale, whom he knew well, and Swami Vivekananda, whose writings

32. See under John Ruskin in William B. Thesing (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vol. 55: *Victorian Prose Writers before 1867* (Detroit, Michigan: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1987), Vol. 55, p. 274.
33. Asha Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi: Shree Publishing House, 1981), pp. 39, 41.
34. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 77.
35. Ibid., p. 124.

on universalism he studied. In the course of his struggle in South Africa, Gandhi was fortunate in having the understanding and support of Gokhale, one of the most prominent leaders of the Congress Party in the pre-First World War years. Gandhi held in deep admiration Gokhale's political acumen, integrity and patriotism, and this admiration was reciprocated by Gokhale, who described Gandhi, in 1909 at a public meeting in Bombay, as 'that indomitable Gandhi, a man of tremendous spiritual power who is made of the stuff of which great heroes and martyrs are made'.[36]

In his first year in South Africa, before he took the plunge into politics, Gandhi read 'quite eighty books', most of them on religion.[37] His autobiography makes it clear that friends of different faiths made an impact on him. It is striking to note that most of those with whom he had contact as a law student in England were individuals of pronounced religious views. Yet, while his Christian friends failed to convert him, the Protestants and Quakers he knew in London and Pretoria had great influence on him, stimulating him to study the New Testament in depth. It was at this time that he studied the Sermon on the Mount, which he remarked had gone straight to his heart.[38] Hermann Kallenbach, a Lithuanian Jew, encouraged him in South Africa and is often mentioned in his autobiography as a trusted friend.[39] Also among the lasting religious influences on Gandhi were some Muslims who had contact with him early in life. His best friend in childhood was Mehtab, a Muslim. As a young lawyer in South Africa, Gandhi practiced with the Muslim legal firm of Dada Abdulla & Company, where his contact with one of the partners, Abdulla Sheth, gave him a serviceable familiarity with Islam. He read the Qur'an in translation. Exactly how much influence these diverse religious sources had on him is impossible to discern, because Gandhi moved freely, borrowing and adapting, creating and synthesizing, always meshing his studies with what he had learned from experience and from his own personal growth.

Thoreau's 'civil disobedience'

Still another influence came from the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau's insistence that unjust laws must be rejected had great resonance with Gandhi, who would later credit Thoreau with providing 'scientific confirmation' of his activities in South Africa and would apply Thoreau to the Indian struggle for independence.[40] Many believe that the

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36. B. R. Nanda, letter to the author, 4 March 1996, p. 3.
37. Ibid., p. 123.
38. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 68.
39. See Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy towards Israel* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University, 1977), pp. 7–14. (Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, 22.)
40. Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle,* op. cit., p. 48.

term *civil disobedience* may have first been used by Thoreau.[41] Although now well known and widely cited for his writing on 'civil disobedience', in actual fact Thoreau *did not* use the term, so far as anyone knows. With Thoreau, civil disobedience was a form of remaining true to one's beliefs. It was mostly used by individuals or groups who had little intention of producing broad political transformations. Six decades later, through Gandhi, it became an instrument of mass action aimed specifically at political change.[42] In the decades since Gandhi, civil disobedience has become one of the most potent tools in the arsenal of nonviolent weaponry employed around the world.

In 1846 (or possibly 1845), Thoreau spent one night in the Concord, Massachusetts, jail for refusing to pay the poll tax. His defiance, he insisted, was intended to show his refusal to support a government that he considered illegitimate because it condoned slavery and was seeking to expand slave territory through the Mexican War; this poll tax was the very same instrument that the Southern states were still using more than a century later to disenfranchise African-American and poor white voters. Thoreau was released on bail when, unbeknown to him, it was paid by a relative. His short prison sojourn resulted in a lecture to the Concord Lyceum in mid-February 1848 called 'The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government'.[43] It would not be an overstatement to say that this lecture changed the world, as we shall see when we look at its impact on Gandhi.

Written in the same year as Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, Thoreau's lecture was originally published in 1849 in a collection called the *Aesthetic Papers* under the title 'Resistance to Civil Government'. It received almost no attention.[44] Thoreau viewed resistance as a matter of conscience – in his case, the assertion of individualism against slavery. Because Concord is not far from the Boston harbor, he may have been inspired by the Boston Tea Party, where, in 1773, an extra-legal method was used to protest unfair taxes on the American colonies imposed by the Crown in London.[45] 'This American government what is it but a tradition . . .' Thoreau asked, 'for a single man can bend it to his will.' 'Unjust laws exist', Thoreau wrote,

41. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., p. 120.
42. Introduction, in Gene Sharp, *Thoreau on the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (London: Housmans, 1963), n.p. (Peace News pamphlet.)
43. Henry David Thoreau, 'Familiar Letters of Henry David Thoreau', in F. B. Sanborn (ed.), *Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, Vol. 11: *The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1894), p. 135.
44. Sharp, *Thoreau on the Duty of Civil Disobedience,* op. cit.
45. Walter H. Conser Jr, Ronald M. McCarthy and David J. Toscano, 'The American Independence Movement, 1765–1775: A Decade of Nonviolent Struggles', in Walter H. Conser Jr, Ronald M. McCarthy and David J. Toscano (eds.), *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765–1775* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986), pp. 3–21.

'shall we transgress them at once?'[46] His focus was on lawbreaking.[47] Later the essay became known by the title used today – 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'.[48]

Authorities differ on when exactly Gandhi first read Thoreau's essay, yet no one questions that it had an important influence on him. Gandhi himself suggests that Thoreau's views struck a chord in him because they reinforced views that he had already formed. In a letter that he wrote to Henry Salt, one of Thoreau's biographers, Gandhi indicates that it was 1907 or later when he encountered Thoreau. Certainly it is true that Gandhi reproduced parts of Thoreau's essay in *Indian Opinion* in September 1907, almost a full year after he had launched his first major campaign in South Africa in opposition to a racially humiliating ordinance that specifically affected Indians adversely.

The American journalist Webb Miller, European news manager for United Press International during the early 1930s, thought Gandhi clarified the matter in London, in 1931, when he asked Gandhi whether he had read Thoreau. Gandhi replied:

> Why, of course I read Thoreau . . . first in Johannesburg in South Africa in 1906 and his ideas influenced me greatly. . . . I actually took the name of my movement from Thoreau's essay, 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'. . . . Until I read that essay I never found a suitable English translation for my Indian word, *Satyagraha*. . . . Thoreau's ideas greatly influenced my movement in India.[49]

Miller was exhilarated that he might have been the first to discern Gandhi's adoption of an American's peculiar notion of nonviolent civil disobedience: 'When I stood beside Thoreau's grave in the mellow sunlight . . . several years later, I wondered what Thoreau would think if he could know that his ideas and one night in jail in Concord had indirectly influenced the current of history and the lives of 350 million Indians three generations later.'[50] A founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, Roger Baldwin, wrote in 1945:

> Thoreau's universalism was never more strikingly brought home to me than during a day I spent with Mr. Gandhi on a train trip through France in 1931. Mr. Gandhi had as the only visible book in his compartment the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience'.

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46. Henry David Thoreau, 'Resistance to Civil Government', in *The Annals of America,* Vol. 7: *1841–1849* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1976), pp. 540, 543.
47. Introduction, in Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p. xix.
48. Henry David Thoreau, 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience', in *Walden and On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (New York: Signet Books, 1962), p. 229.
49. Webb Miller, *I Found No Peace: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1936), pp. 238, 239.
50. Ibid., p. 239.

I remarked on it as rather extreme doctrine for a nationalist. Mr. Gandhi responded that it contained the essence of his political philosophy, not only as India's struggle related to the British, but as to his own views of the relation of citizens to government. He observed . . . that Thoreau first formulated for him the tactics of civil disobedience, whose very name he borrowed, and gave it moral justification.[51]

Having settled the question of the meaning of *satyagraha* with his Indian followers in South Africa, for his English-speaking audiences Gandhi adopted what he believed was Thoreau's term, *civil disobedience*, from one of the essay's later versions and, thereafter, began using *civil disobedience* interchangeably with *satyagraha*.

Albert Einstein, who admired Gandhi because he believed that his thinking and techniques offered the world the means to move away from nuclear warfare, may have had the last word:

It should not be forgotten that Gandhi's development was something resulting from extraordinary intellectual and moral forces in connection with political ingenuity. . . . I think that Gandhi would have been Gandhi even without Thoreau and Tolstoy.[52]

The early years

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 into a family of merchants at Porbandar, capital of a small principality in the state of Gujarat in western India, in the region of Kathiawar. His father did not possess much of a formal education, but as an administrator and chief minister of that small principality he understood how to manage the often conflicting demands of the British, who ruled over India, and the traditional princely families and their subjects. The youngest child of his father's fourth wife, Gandhi was raised by his devout mother in a home built around Vaisnavism, the worship of the Hindu god Vishnu. The family had done well enough and possessed sufficient wealth that they had their own temples for worship. In addition to Hindu influences, as mentioned earlier, the asceticism of Jainism was a potent and all-pervasive force in Gujarat.[53] Both the Vaisnavas and Jains in Gujarat held strong convictions against the slaughter of animals and the eating of meat. Gandhi adopted these views not only because they were prevalent, but also because he was devoted to his mother, a woman of staunch convictions. Furthermore, as he later explained, he equated the strength to resist eating meat with the daring necessary for India to defeat Britain and free India.[54]

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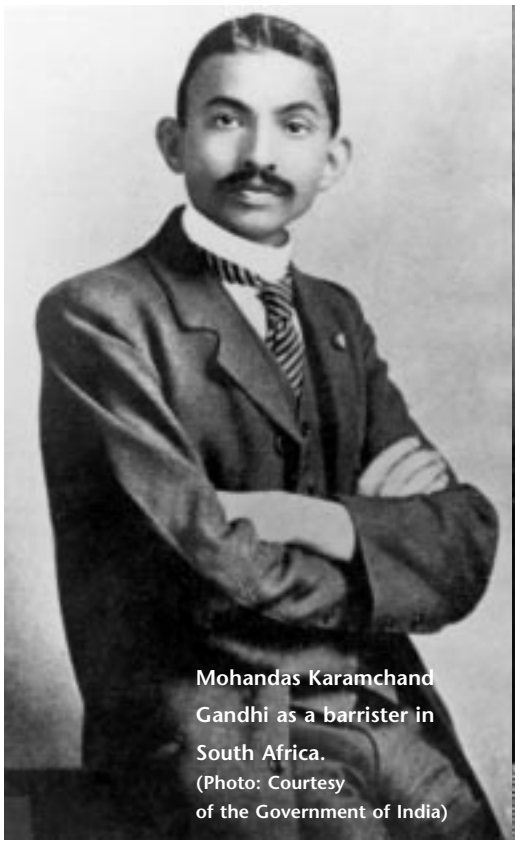
51. Roger Baldwin, 'The Walden Centenary', *Thoreau Society Bulletin,* 11 April 1945, p. 3.
52. Albert Einstein, 'Einstein on Gandhi and Thoreau', letter to Professor Harding of 19 April 1953, *Thoreau Society Bulletin,* No. 45, Fall 1953, p. 3.
53. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 21.
54. Ibid.



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as a barrister in South Africa.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi as a *satyagrahi*, or nonviolent resister, in South Africa. It was here that he developed his concept of *satyagraha* – insistence on Truth, or nonviolent resistance – finding reinforcement from the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi and his wife Kasturbai, in South Africa in 1913.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi with his followers on the 1930 Salt March. They are wearing homespun, or *khadi*, a symbol of the self-reliance that is central to nonviolent struggle.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

His father decided that Gandhi should marry, at the age of 13, an illiterate child bride in a three-way ceremony – which would be more economical than three separate weddings – during which an older brother and a nephew would also wed. The young life of his bride Kasturbai had been governed by the tradition of seclusion or purdah, which Gandhi later denounced as 'useless and barbarous'.[55] Although Kasturbai remained loyally at his side through all the tempests of his life – sharing his deprivations, personal denial, fasting, and even his vows of celibacy until her death in 1944 – Gandhi would spend much of his life attempting to come to grips with the juvenile vows of his arranged marriage and would never fully reconcile the conflicts he felt over the espousal into which he was forced by his parents.[56]

Although he was an average student attending indifferent schools, Gandhi proved to be a faithful son and husband. This does not mean that he was not prey to the youthful indiscretions similar to those of his peers: the questioning of religion, secretly smoking, the purloining of copper and gold coins, and the astonishing sampling of meat. What was remarkable about Gandhi, however, was the firmness with which he rejected each of these lapses and the systematic way in which he resolved never again to make such a breach. His strength of character was such that he was able to keep these oaths to himself – so great was his desire for self-improvement.

In addition to the Sanskrit that he studied at high school, when Gandhi enrolled in Samaldas College in Bhavnagar, the university-level courses required that he shift from his first language, his native Gujarati, to English. A family adviser recommended a trip to Britain, where it was said he might qualify as a barrister, offering a diversion from his lackluster studies at Samaldas College. He had helped his mother to nurse his father through his final illness, and although medicine was his first preference, the law offered some potential for him to follow his father's course to high office. A sojourn abroad held some attraction to his family but, before they would let him set sail for such a distant and foreign abode, he had to placate his mother, who did not want to be parted from her son. He swore solemnly to his mother that no matter what the temptations were that lay in store for him in Britain, he would have nothing to do with wine, women or meat.

Aged 18, he sailed from Bombay on 4 September 1888, for England, leaving his wife and their baby behind. At the Inner Temple, one of the four law colleges in London, he read for the law examination. His autobiography records lonely feelings in the forbidding British Isles, so far from home and all the things that were familiar. During his three years in London, he respected the promises he had made to his mother and frequented

55. Ibid., p. 13.

56. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth,* op. cit., pp. 115–33.

a vegetarian restaurant where he joined with 'a motley mix of Theosophists, Fabian Socialists, and Christian visionaries who were followers of Tolstoi'.[57] As he listened to their debates over capitalism, the evils of industrial organization, the virtues of simple living and the supremacy of moral over material values, he was touched. He became a member of the London Vegetarian Society's executive committee, read seriously about vegetarianism and wrote articles for the society's journals. He was, however, extremely shy and later recalled painfully that he was all but unable to speak at the meetings of the small vegetarian group. 'I sat quite silent', he remembered, 'I was at a loss to know how to express myself. . . . It often happened that just when I had mustered up courage to speak, a fresh subject would be started.'[58]

His resilience and tenacity were such that he was soon able to find the tranquillity to combine his law studies with energetic philosophical and intellectual pursuits. Whether from feeling that he was ridiculed both as an Indian and as a vegetarian, or out of a desire to search the Hindu traditions for spiritual inspiration comparable to that of his assertive and rebellious dining partners, Gandhi took up intensive reading of the Bhagavad Gita and the New Testament, both of them for the first time in his life. Profoundly affected by what he read, the poetry of the Bhagavad Gita, which he studied in its English translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, became his daily life's guide. He studied the Gita deeply during his South African days and learned to interpret the texts symbolically – despite their being concerned with physical warfare, combat and justifying fighting – much as we might use military terms such as *weapon* or *battle* when speaking of a nonviolent action. Two words in particular appealed to him: *aparigraha* – nonpossession, signifying freedom from the weight of property – and *samabhava*, connoting equanimity and remaining unruffled by success or failure.[59] Gandhi construed the philosophical texts to demonstrate the futility of violence and extracted from his reading the message that life needed to be lived rather than analyzed.[60] He also drew from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita the inspiration for his lifelong practice of fasting and liked to recall the scriptural admonition to mental fasting as well as physical self-restraint:

> For a man who is fasting his senses
> Outwardly . . . disappear,
> Leaving the yearning behind; but when
> He has seen the highest,
> Even the yearning disappears.[61]

57. Eliade, *Encyclopedia of Religion,* op. cit., p. 482.
58. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 59.
59. *Encyclopædia Britannica* (see under 'Gandhi').
60. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 69.
61. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 332.

On returning to India from Britain, Gandhi found that his beloved mother had died. He also discovered that having been called to the bar as a British barrister was no passport to success in India. When he tried to argue a case in a Bombay court of law, he did poorly, and was even rejected for a part-time position teaching at a Bombay high school. He was, additionally, forced to accept that he had been excommunicated from the caste into which he had been born because he had traveled abroad, something the caste leaders had forbidden. He lacked confidence, thought he was without proper skills for developing a career and, seeing himself without credibility, in 1893 accepted an offer to travel again and work in South Africa with a law firm in Natal, under a paltry year's contract as a lawyer for a commercial client.

Although his study of religion and political philosophy had begun to take shape in London, it was in South Africa that his character and principles would define themselves. It was there that Gandhi had his first encounters with blatant prejudice against people of color. As an Indian, he was subjected to numerous instances of racism and bigotry. In court in Durban, he was forced by the magistrate to remove his turban, a humiliation he rejected as he strode out of the courtroom. Once, when traveling from Durban to Pretoria by train, he was tossed out of the first-class carriage by a constable, despite his correct ticket, and left fuming at Maritzburg station in the capital of Natal. Farther down the tracks, he was beaten up by a white passenger because he would not step aside and use the footboard to make way for a European traveler. Hotels designated for Europeans only turned him down. The train trip from Durban to Pretoria made a lasting impact on him, and his experiences with what he considered the diseased mind of prejudice grated on him. Gandhi came to understand, through his own ordeals, the conditions under which all Indians were living in South Africa.

Neither as a student in India, while reading for the law in London, nor as a green barrister had Gandhi distinguished himself by an ability to stand up to authority or challenge tradition. Yet, as he witnessed how his fellow Indians were subjected to daily hurdles in South Africa, while receiving the most pathetic pay for their labors, he committed himself to doing something tangible about their hardships. The Gandhi who could barely find breath to utter one word at the Vegetarian Society in London revolted. The injustice he met in South Africa brought out in him a quality of quiet forcefulness and a framework for thinking about how to accomplish goals. After his sojourn in South Africa, the abnormal shyness he had experienced in London simply disappeared. He would later look back on this period and say, 'South Africa gave the start to my life's mission.'[62] Narasimha Rao,

62. *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 33, 1969, p. 165.

a prime minister of India who had worked with Gandhi as a youth, decades later concluded that Gandhi had chosen public life essentially to fight racial discrimination.[63]

Upon arriving in Pretoria after his humiliating train trip, one of Gandhi's first activities was to call a meeting of the Indian community for discussion of their condition. The meeting was successful. One result of the gathering was Gandhi's suggestion that a group form to voice Indian grievances to the South African Government. He, at the same time, offered to teach English to those Indians who wished to learn another tongue. Gandhi was soon an active and well-known member of the South African Indian community. He also made himself known to the British agent through efforts to alert the government to the circumstances of the Indians. He was not planning on remaining in South Africa. As his year's contract was drawing to a close in June 1894, he found himself in Durban, preparing to leave, when he learned by chance that the Natal legislative body was readying a Bill to disfranchise the Indians living in Natal, then a British Crown colony. When he explained the legislation to his non-English-reading compatriots, they begged him to stay in South Africa and help them fight it. He agreed to a one-month extension.

In coordinating efforts to publicize the case of the Indians, he and a group of volunteers created a petition that was signed by 400 Indians. The appeal was delivered to the legislature, where it was disregarded and the Bill passed anyway. The Indian community in Natal, however, did not waste time wallowing in disappointment. They were grateful that publicity had been given to their problems, and a spirit of renewal and involvement in the Indian community left a lasting impression. Gandhi, aged 25, felt that he had been changed by this experience with politics, government and personal involvement. Although he had known little exposure to the realm of politics and had found public speaking painful, as a result of the experience of mobilizing against the legislative effort to disfranchise Indians, he determined that he would use whatever tools he had at his disposal to defeat the impending legislation. Knowing that the Bill had to be approved by the British Government, Gandhi gathered 10,000 signatures and sent them to London. In the meantime, his friends encouraged him to stay longer, which he did, having become convinced of the need to remain in Durban to practice law. He established the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, to help Indians look after their own interests, and became its general secretary. The Congress became a guide, not only for the defense of the Indians in the area, but also a method of uniting the Indian community.

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63. P. V. Narasimha Rao, *Gandhi in the Global Village* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995), p. 3. (Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture Series: 125th Anniversary of the Birth of Gandhi.)

As a consequence of Gandhi's efforts at publicity, the world beyond South Africa could not ignore the plight of the Indian subjects of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the monarch of Britain and empress of India; editorials ran in *The Times* of London and *The Statesman* of Calcutta pertaining to the issues raised by Natal Indians. The disfranchisement legislation was eventually vetoed by the Colonial Office in London, due in large part to the agitation that had been stimulated by Gandhi. The punitive spirit of the Bill was carried forward in other legislative language, under a different rubric, yet Gandhi and his Indian colleagues were gratified that racial prejudice as written into that specific piece of legislation had not been signed into law. Gandhi was admitted as an advocate to the South African Supreme Court, but without his turban. He had concluded that one must choose one's battles carefully.[64]

Gandhi returned to India in 1896 to gather his wife Kasturbai and their children, to bring them back with him to South Africa. Before setting sail from India with the family, he mounted a small campaign to garner support for the cause of the Indians in South Africa. These efforts included distributing pamphlets and touring various locations, where he succeeded in rousing public leaders to speak out about the situation faced by their fellow countrymen and women. Distorted tales of Gandhi's efforts in India, however, quickly reached the Europeans of Natal, who were infuriated by the confused accounts, and his return trip to Durban was filled with adversities. The Gandhi family arrived in port on 18 December 1896 but were unable to go ashore until 13 January 1897, after being denied entry for twenty-five days due to crowds of angry Europeans. Once disembarked at Durban, Gandhi was almost lynched by a horde of white men, and his family was forced to travel separately to their lodgings in order to avoid being accosted. His calm handling of the circumstances and refusal to press charges against those who had attacked him only served to raise his popularity and the esteem in which he was held in the Natal area.[65]

In 1899, as the turn of the century approached, and nearly three years after the Gandhi family had arrived in South Africa, the Boer War erupted. To the consternation of those who wished he had been a more polarizing figure, Gandhi felt a loyalty to and actually supported the British.[66] He maintained that when Indians claimed citizenship in a British colony, they were obligated to defend it. He would later be sternly criticized for supporting the war effort but, at that time, Gandhi said he 'believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world'.[67] Gandhi created

64. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 45.
65. Ibid., pp. 56, 57.
66. Ibid., p. 58.
67. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 313.

an ambulance corps of 1,100 Indians as an expression of support for the British. The British victory in the Boer War, however, was inconsequential compared with the Indians' problems in South Africa.

Returning to India at the end of 1901, Gandhi attended the Indian National Congress before setting out on another tour of his homeland. His stay was short, because he was called back to Durban in 1902 to help fight the legislative repression of Indians in another part of South Africa. A six-month stay in South Africa turned into twelve years. During these years, Gandhi continued his study of religions and his search for the paths that would guide him through life. He came to see the impact that structural forms of violence could have on society: hunger, poverty, the oppression of women, the privilege of the few and the powerlessness of so many.[68] Gandhi sought to eradicate the violence created by the frustration and anger felt by the poor and powerless, as well as the violence of the powerful who feed off those who are repressed and left without entitlements. It was his observation of a pathological violence ingrained in the structure of society that would fuel Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns and underlie his insistence on the technique of nonviolent resistance, because he did not want to replace harm with harm. For Gandhi, South Africa highlighted the depths of institutionalized violence and convinced him of the need for a procedure that could undermine such violence from within.

A strategy unfolds

In 1906, the Transvaal government announced a demeaning statute called the Asiatic Registration Ordinance that would have required every Indian immigrant to register with the government and to be fingerprinted. On 11 September 1906, Gandhi convened a meeting of 3,000 Indians, in Johannesburg, in order to protest the regulation.[69] Those present took a mass pledge to disobey – nonviolently – the registration legislation and to accept all penalties that resulted from their noncooperation. The meeting would prove crucial to the development of Gandhi's strategy and the beginning of the concept of *satyagraha*, or nonviolent resistance.[70] The idea advanced in the mass meeting was the concept that by inviting greater hardships on oneself in the process of resisting than would be inflicted by the action being protested, the Indians could stand up and fight the opponent without retaliation, nonviolently.[71]

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68 Gandhi looked at both the direct violence of military battle and the structured violence of a slum from the point of view of the victim or object, and rejected both as antithetical to self-realization. See Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., pp. 67–9.

69. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 92, 95.

70. Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* op. cit., p. 25.

71. As mentioned earlier, Gandhi's letter to Henry Salt suggests that it was in 1907 – not long after the pivotal Johannesburg meeting – that Gandhi encountered Thoreau's

In 1908, Gandhi was locked up for two months because of his fight against the Asiatic Registration Ordinance. Gandhi had continued to encourage Indians not to register, and he organized well-attended meetings to sustain the morale of the Indian community. It was during this time that 'Tolstoy Farm' was created near Johannesburg as a haven for families of the imprisoned. These were years of growth for Gandhi. Disciplined living on the farm and growing their own food had the effect of emboldening the men, women and children who were trying to learn from Gandhi and follow his ideas of truth and nonviolent resistance.[72] Yet Gandhi struggled emotionally with the consequences from such resistance as he saw families being broken up by prison sentences. As time went on and the struggle continued in South Africa, the idea of being jailed lost its ability to terrify Gandhi's adherents, and some Indians even began to invite imprisonment.

In 1912, Indian women in South Africa were called into action along with the men to fight against a Bill that would have made all Indian marriages invalid. With the impetus of this Bill, Gandhi sent groups of women into the Transvaal region to encourage Indian mine workers to strike. This was an area of South Africa for which they did not have entry permits. A group of women was able to reach the miners without being arrested, however, and convinced the workers to strike as a method of fighting the government and its prejudicial laws. Many, including women and Gandhi, went to jail as the penalty for participation; yet not even the imprisonment of their leader was enough to deter the Indians from their path of reform. Toward the final stage of the South African movement in 1913, hundreds of Indian men and women chose to resist, and submit to prison terms, rather than undergo the indignity of unjust laws, and thousands endured corporal punishment along with jail, even shooting, for protesting labor conditions in the mines. As the campaign continued, many European South Africans became sympathetic to the position taken by the Indians and pressed the government to make amends for its discrimination and harsh policies. Finally, a commission of inquiry was announced in order to quiet the criticism. Not one Indian was named to the panel. Gandhi urged a boycott but, finally, agreed to sit down to negotiate with the South African Government, which gave in to the Indians on some major points of their campaign. The *satyagraha* campaign was formally and successfully ended, and Gandhi hoped that the new atmosphere would facilitate the redress of other wrongs from which the Indians suffered.[73]

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writings on civil disobedience which reinforced his beliefs and gave him a way to talk about his concept of nonviolent resistance in English. Strengthened by Thoreau's adamance on disobeying unjust statutes, Gandhi would spend the next seven years enmeshed in struggle on behalf of the Indian minority in South Africa.

72. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 110.

73. Ibid., pp. 116–18.

Gandhi had written a booklet in 1909, *Hind Swaraj*, or 'Indian Home Rule', which although published in South Africa showed that he was already addressing the major question of Indian independence. Expressing his thoughts about freeing India from British colonial domination, the booklet's ideas were aimed at those who were urging the use of violence to free India and their counterparts in South Africa. He specifically wanted to rebut the notions of violent struggle being advocated as a solution by some zealous anarchists, because he was convinced that 'violence was no remedy for India's ills' and that 'her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection'.[74] Innovatively arranged as a question-and-answer dialogue between an editor (Gandhi) and a reader, the ninety-two-page handout's discussion of nationalism and British authority is organized into twenty chapters. These can be broken down into the three levels envisioned by Gandhi for the national struggle. The first level is that of a radical and far-reaching crusade, which he knew would engender only limited support. The second level is moderate, providing points that most people could adopt and fight for, such as democracy and independence. The third level presents a strategy for fulfilling immediate goals, such as the repeal of particular laws or statutes.[75] Gandhi knew that his fellow Indians were not yet ready to put into practice all the ideals that he was championing. The booklet would be translated from the Gujarati language again and again, would go through numerous reprints and be banned by the British authorities. What is perhaps most significant about this booklet's publication is that Gandhi's strategy and, indeed, his life's vision were laid out in this small work.

Return to India

The Viramgam customs

Gandhi left South Africa in 1914, at 44 years of age, and arrived in India to a hero's welcome. He had spent less than four years in his homeland since originally leaving for Britain, and his personality and politics had been profoundly shaped by his sojourn in South Africa. Upon his return to the subcontinent, Gandhi was once asked to speculate on whether *satyagraha* would ever come to India and, if so, when. Gandhi replied that he had first to take time – one year – to travel in his country of birth, to relearn his homeland, and he would then need time to gather his thoughts. In his mind, he did not suppose that *satyagraha* would arrive for another five years.[76] That prediction would not stand.

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74. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule,* op. cit., p. 15.
75. George Lakey and Mubarak Awad, 'Training for Building Nonviolent Campaigns', notes from a meeting, Washington, D.C., 2 May 1992.
76. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 383.

As Gandhi encountered injustices in his travels, he was sparked into action. Shortly after his return, Gandhi encountered a process called the Viramgam customs. During his *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa, he had shed his barrister's clothes and worn those of indentured laborers so as not to be set apart from those with whom he was working. As he prepared to travel by rail in a third-class compartment from Bombay, in Gujarat, he similarly abandoned his suit of factory-made cloth in favor of modest clothing so he would 'pass muster as a poor man'.[77] Thus it was that he encountered the customs procedures requiring medical checks of third-class train passengers for symptoms of the bubonic plague when they traveled into Viramgam. Gandhi had a fever. This resulted in the medical inspector taking down his name and sending him to the medical officer at Rajkot. Many of those who were inspected complained of receiving poor treatment from the inspectors. For Gandhi, of course, the issue took on greater meaning than solely rude treatment by medical inspectors. He saw the Viramgam customs as emblematic of the problems of the poor who were met with condescension and contempt wherever they went.

Gandhi prepared himself and others for the possibility of going to jail if they mounted a protest. Having researched their complaints and the available literature, Gandhi decided to talk to medical officers and corresponded with the government in Bombay. He used all the contacts he could muster and raised the matter with every authority to whom he had access. Referred to British officials in Delhi, after initially being ignored, he was finally able to lay out his concerns. Within a few days of presenting the facts of the undignified treatment of third-class rail passengers, Gandhi read in the newspapers that the customs cordon was removed.

This episode is revealing. Gandhi's philosophy of resolving conflicts did not require the agitation and confrontation of noncooperation and civil disobedience unless other steps had failed – formal contacts, negotiations, protests or sanctions such as picketing. Persuasion was at the heart of his approach. He invariably sought first to solve a problem by using persuasive methods such as letters of opposition, mass petitions, declarations or formal public acts such as presentations of grievances, many of which measures have a largely symbolic component. Only when these failed to induce a positive response did he proceed to methods of social, economic or political noncooperation. Gandhi considered the revocation of the Viramgam customs to be the 'advent' of *satyagraha* in India, all the more so because the secretary of the Bombay government had expressed his dislike of a reference to *satyagraha* in a speech that Gandhi had given. The British official, offended, had asked Gandhi if he were threatening him and whether he thought British authorities yielded to threats.

77. Ibid., p. 377.

'This was no threat', [Gandhi] replied. 'It was educating the people. It is my duty to place before the people all the legitimate remedies for grievances. A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means to freedom. Usually they include violence as the last remedy. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is an absolutely non-violent weapon. I regard it as my duty to explain its practice and limitations. I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy.'[78]

Brick by brick: the constructive program

Following his year of travel and refamiliarization with India, Gandhi set up the Sabarmati ashram (later called Satyagraha ashram), near Ahmedabad, the industrial capital of Gujarat, due north of Bombay. Ahmedabad was also the ancient center for Indian hand-spinning and hand-loomed weaving, *khadi* or *khaddar.* The settlement got off to a shaky start when Gandhi decided that the ashram would accept an outcaste or untouchable family into its midst. The surrounding community that had been supporting the ashram withdrew its cooperation to protest the presence of the untouchables. Gandhi prepared the families living in the ashram to make an actual move into the neighborhood where the untouchables lived because of the resulting lack of funds, but this became unnecessary when an anonymous donation made it possible for them to remain. While the relocation crisis was averted, it became clear that members of the ashram themselves were not happy with the presence of the untouchables.

Gandhi had gone to great pains to instill in those who lived in the ashrams his notions of hard work, nonviolence and nonpossession, and he had emphasized the ideals of his fight against untouchability. His ashrams were built on the expectation that their residents would creatively abide by moral and spiritual vows they had taken in the hope of creating a just and peaceful society, including their willing acceptance of manual labor. The combination of thought and action would, he believed, make it possible both figuratively and literally to work to erase the blemish of prejudice from one's soul. Ashrams represented experiments in living, part of Gandhi's greater vision of nonviolence, and his goal of freeing people from their inner as well as outer hatred and violence.[79]

In 1917, Gandhi visited Champaran to inquire into the grievances of Indian agrarian workers against indigo planters. It was here, far north of the Ganges River and at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, that he also began an experiment that he called 'constructive work' or the 'constructive program'. While Gandhi observed that the uneducated masses were easy targets for oppression and injustice, he was inspired by the agrarian poor.

78. Ibid., pp. 379–80.

79. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 136–7.

In one rural community, Gandhi was moved: 'It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth.'[80]

If education offered the best solution for the problems of ingrained poverty, it was also a protracted and long-term response. The question for Gandhi, therefore, was how to accomplish major institutional changes in the existing social and political order without relying on the traditional approaches, each of which had it own deficiencies. Personal reclusiveness was merely a private expression, charity depended on the generosity of others and individual good works would not affect national needs. Entitlements, which were not available, would be distrusted if proposed, and actions by an unwieldy or unjust state apparatus would not necessarily produce the desired institutional change. Furthermore, Gandhi did not want to emphasize strategies that centralized power. His ideal was direct democracy, and he believed that democracy had its best guarantor in decentralization. He wanted to find an alternative.

The optional approach that Gandhi developed involved creating a set of decentralized institutions to serve as the infrastructure of a just society. It was to be 'built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort', simultaneously a means of social reconstruction and a work program for concrete results.[81] The constructive program embraced seventeen components, including the following: making *khadi,* or the hand-spun cloth of village production, which would enable the poor to decentralize economic production and on a national basis could free the country of dependency on foreign manufacturing; cottage industries, such as making soap and paper and pressing oil; village sanitation; adult education; advancement of women; and the development of more labor unions committed to nonviolent action.[82]

What may be most significant is that Gandhi saw the constructive program as a way of proceeding toward a new social reality in the midst of the old. In other words, while still bowed down by injustice or repression, people could begin to work on creating more equitable organizations and start achieving self-sufficiency in the process. The new order could be introduced before the old had fallen. The fruits of the struggle could be realized within small entities close to home, while ancient traditional structures were still being recast or reformed. Moreover, since strategies of noncooperation rest on detaching oneself from reliance or dependency on one's opponent, the basis for a national strategy of noncooperation would also be in the process of construction. Similarly, civil disobedience requires

80. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 412.
81. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), pp. 21, 22.
82. Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* op. cit., pp. 77–86.

detachment. In the context of a constructive work program, nonviolence could thus more easily become the law of the land.[83]

The toil involving *khadi* was a singularly creative movement within the framework of Gandhi's overall constructive program. Its development as an ongoing campaign within other campaigns should be looked at against the backdrop of the powerlessness of the poor. While the middle classes of India were ideologically inclined toward nationalism, and organizationally able to act on these impulses, the laborers in Indian fields and factories had been systematically exploited by colonialism to an extent that the middle classes had not. The nationalism of the educated could be expounded eloquently, and they possessed the means for political expression, although insufficient. The nationalist hopes and aspirations of the poor, however, could be expressed only in inchoate uprisings that were easily suppressed. Furthermore, prolonged undernourishment and hunger had produced apathy, and Gandhi found that the feelings of uselessness and insignificance that had resulted meant that the poor were immobilized. Gandhi saw equality as inseparable from freedom and regarded it as a basic prerequisite to a nonviolent social order. To Gandhi, violence was sown by economic inequality, and unless eliminated through nonviolent means, violent revolution would likely erupt. How, then, to arouse the poor – who were often unemployed and in despair – to see themselves as persons with dignity, identity and aptitude, who were not helpless and who, by rejecting passivity, could alter their own circumstances?

The handloom and spinning wheel that Gandhi restored and with which he became symbolically associated did not represent a comprehensive economic overhaul of the poverty of peasants and low-wage workers. Nor was it a means of freeing Indian manufacturing from colonial extortion. Rather, its revolutionary effects came from the uplift and self-respect gained by the poor for themselves. Gandhi had legitimate concerns about massive industrialization and the flight of impoverished rural laborers to the misery of the cities. Many, including Indian Marxists, ridiculed his views as reactionary. Yet the genius of Gandhi's *khadi* campaign was that it did something about the inertia of the poor and altered their feelings of impotence. The making of homespun on the humble spinning wheel meant not only hand-loomed fabric for clothing that could be worn but, additionally, it signified that the poor were visibly participating in the national struggle.

The zestful and robust participation of India's poor in the *khadi* movement and other aspects of the constructive program encouraged the self-respect that is a prerequisite for nonviolent mass resistance campaigns. Self-discipline is virtually impossible without respect for oneself and the

83. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., p. 53.

pride that comes from dignity; and nonviolent resistance is ineffectual without self-discipline. A person operating from a nonviolent conviction does not feel the humiliation of insulting behavior by violent antagonists, because self-respect neutralizes the effects of the insult; instead, the aggressor is the one who loses dignity.[84] Such an approach, thought Gandhi, could help minimize the outbreaks of violence in any civil disobedience campaign. Since self-discipline and training were necessary for *satyagraha* and techniques such as noncooperation and civil disobedience, the constructive work program, with its making of *khadi*, would act as fundamental training in preparation for larger and more complex operations; in the same way that military commanders view physical drills, target practice and refresher courses in military academies as training for future wars, Gandhi saw the constructive program as preparation of future *satyagrahis* in nonviolent resistance.[85] He thought constructive work could be effective for one village or even for an entire country.

If accepted by the entire nation of India, Gandhi believed, constructive work could lead to the achievement of *purna swaraj*, or 'complete independence'.[86] Spinning was a form of organizing, and any district organized for the spinning of yarn to make homespun was on the path to preparation for *satyagraha*. Hand-looming could thus lead to home rule.[87] Furthermore, to Gandhi, genuine democracy would be fed by self-esteem and, so, the self-respect that came from constructive work could help India attain freedom and equality.

The Ahmedabad textile mill *satyagraha*

A problem began to brew when workers at the textile mills in Ahmedabad requested the continuation of a cost-of-living bonus they had been given, in August 1917, when mill owners sought to persuade laborers not to flee an epidemic of bubonic plague. The plague bonus in some cases represented 70 or 80 percent of the workers' usual wages and, having been continued after the danger of the epidemic had passed, its proposed revocation would have posed severe economic problems for the mill hands. In January of the following year, when the mills' proprietors announced their plan to cease

84. Naess, *Gandhi and Group Conflict,* op. cit., pp. 107–11.

85. B. R. Nanda, telecopier-facsimile memorandum to the author on the influence of Thoreau and the constructive program, New Delhi, 14 December 1995.

86. Jayatanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969), p. 205.

87. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), p. 231. Gandhi saw noncooperation as training for self-rule. Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle,* op. cit., p. 321. Just as the connection between *satyagraha* and *swaraj*, or self-rule, was implicit – all people could participate in nonviolent action in ways that freed them from fear and hatred – an implicit link also existed between self-rule and *khadi*, or constructive work, because self-respect was essential for self-governance.

the bonus, the laborers protested that prices had risen and argued for a 50 percent increase to their June salaries as a cost-of-living allowance.

Between 5,000 and 10,000 people comprised the labor force of the Ahmedabad textile mills. Gandhi was asked by one of the mill owners to intervene. He came to Ahmedabad to investigate and was able to persuade both parties to participate in a process of arbitration, which involved three representatives from the workers and three from the mill owners with the British collector chairing.[88] Although Gandhi had personal friendships among both the proprietors and the laborers, he was one of the three representatives of the workers to be appointed. Unfortunately, these efforts were derailed when the owners imposed a lockout on 22 February 1918, and workers went on strike before the arbitration could begin, any potential good from arbitration having been dissipated by the mill proprietors' announcing that anyone not willing to accept a 20 percent increase would be dismissed. As Gandhi studied the situation, he came to the conclusion that a 35 percent rise would be fair and advised the strikers to demand nothing more and accept no less. When the mill owners rejected this figure, Gandhi launched another experiment in *satyagraha*.

The program began with leaflets being distributed among the workers detailing the platform that the workers should adopt and asking each one of them to pledge nonviolent struggle. The campaign was to diverge from the course of most other labor strikes in several ways: There was to be absolutely no violence, the workers were to spend any time on strike learning new skills and bettering the community, and they were to take up other endeavors so as not to become a burden or seek charity; indeed, some became employed building the weaving school at Gandhi's nearby ashram.[89] In addition to the unusual feature of Gandhi's having close personal relationships with both labor and management, there was another peculiarity: an able labor organizer, Anasuya Sarabhai, helped to lead the *satyagrahi* strikers. She 'had broken away from the conventions of a rich mill-owner's home and organized the workmen of the city into a labour union . . . [which] ran twenty-two schools in the city, several of them for Untouchables'.[90] Under her guidance, various actions had successfully lowered the number of working hours per day from twelve to ten and raised the age for child laborers from ten years to twelve. Her brother Ambalal Sarabhai represented management and was described by Gandhi as the

88. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth,* op. cit., p. 328.

89. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 431; Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 332; Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 67.

90. Muriel Lester, 'With Gandhi in India and at Kingsley Hall', in Richard Deats (ed.), *Ambassador of Reconciliation: A Muriel Lester Reader* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: New Society Publishers, 1991), p. 136, excerpted from *It So Happened* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).

person 'at the back of the mill-owners' unbending attitude towards the strike'.[91] Gandhi and others spoke to thousands of workers each day from under a babul tree at Sabarmati, encouraging and helping them while refreshing the memory of all the participants about how they had forsworn violence in their *satyagraha* pledge.[92] Daily parades and processions moved through the city streets calling for unity and determination. A welfare plan was instituted to share information on sanitation and health care.

Unfortunately, despite an initial compact that the strikers would hold out with no surrender, whatever the length of the strike, the morale of many workers plummeted as they were tempted to accept the offer of a 20 percent increase rather than holding out for the minimum 35 percent set by Gandhi and the workers' advocates. Gandhi intensified his efforts to build the resolve of the strikers, but the regular meetings at the babul tree were attended by fewer and fewer people, and he witnessed despondency and despair on the faces of those who came. In an attempt to stiffen the determination of the workers, Gandhi began a fast and told the workers, 'Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food.'[93] Although he attempted to dissuade any strikers from joining him, many fasted on the first day in solidarity with him. Gandhi confessed that he was torn by his fast. He viewed fasting as an extremely potent technique in which, because of an emotionally coercive effect, one's opponents were essentially forced to change. He felt that his personal friendship with Ahmedabad's mill owners meant that fasting would have a manipulative effect on them by applying unfair pressure. He preferred that they come to a judicious decision on their own, in reaction to a concerted and well-organized nonviolent job action that clarified the inequities involved. Yet he knew the laborers needed strong encouragement.

On the third evening of the fast, Ambalal Sarabhai spoke on behalf of the mill proprietors and offered a 35 percent concession if Gandhi would, in return, stay away from the workers in the future. Gandhi rejected the demand as excessive. Finally, twenty-one days after the actual strike began, the mill owners conceded and agreed to binding arbitration. The workers were invited to return to work with a temporary wage increase on 12 March, with the final percentage of their cost-of-living bonus to be decided by a professor from Gujarat College who was acceptable to both sides as the arbitrator. When the settlement was announced, Gandhi broke his fast. The strikers eventually received their 35 percent wage increase. While various leaders from within the Ahmedabad labor movement made grateful speeches

91. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 432.
92. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 163; Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 428.
93. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 431. A list of Gandhi's fasts can be found in Appendix 1.

to show their satisfaction, the mill owners and managers decided to distribute sweets to demonstrate theirs. They chose to dispense the treats in the open, under the same babul tree where the *satyagraha* pledge had first been taken. Yet the proprietors had not reckoned with the problems of handing out pastries and candies to perhaps 10,000 workers. Gandhi thought that the same laborers who could maintain strict discipline in a twenty-one-day strike would have no trouble queuing for confections, but he later recalled bemusedly that a scramble broke out again and again.[94]

Because of the unintended coercive implications of his fast, the Ahmedabad *satyagraha* fell below Gandhi's expectations. A *satyagraha* campaign for Gandhi was not a matter of mechanics or tactics. A first requirement was for all available avenues to be exhausted for achieving resolution without humiliation to the opponent. Subsequently, steps would be followed in which three basic elements of *satyagraha* would be observed: Original demands would be clearly stated and not be enlarged; whatever was achieved through *satyagraha* would be retained by *satyagraha* (that is, no gloating); and lastly, *satyagraha* would not know defeat. Complete willingness to accept the penalties of any defiance or law-breaking was fundamental. By seeking firmness in Truth, there could, in a sense, be no failure; as important, there should be no triumphal embarrassment or shaming of the antagonist – recalling the sense of equability or evenness in the Bhagavad Gita that attracted Gandhi. He understood that resolving conflicts and nonviolent action takes time because the opponent must be allowed to view the situation in a different light. For him, a conflict that is solved but leaves the parties unaffected would not mean success. Publicity would thus become an important aspect of any *satyagraha* campaign because a good communications program would make the issues clear to everyone, and the antagonist would not become confused or flustered about the goals. In addition, a constructive program would be presented as part of any well-conceived campaign, with attention to services for those in the campaign. Simple fasting or mere demonstrations without all the other forms of the power of Truth would not qualify.

Apart from Gandhi's concern that he created duress for his friends, the mill owners, the objective facts suggest that the Ahmedabad campaign was highly effective from the standpoint of nonviolent struggle. The experience at Ahmedabad was historically important, too, as it was the first example of arbitration in an industrial dispute in India and led to the formation of a trade union with a social services program for its members, the Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association. By the 1940s, the association had become one of the most powerful of India's labor unions, with a membership roster of 55,000, and was cited for its local leadership and the mechanisms of arbitration and conciliation encouraged by Gandhi.[95]

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94. Ibid., p. 433.
95. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 73.

Gandhi rises on the Indian stage

The Rowlatt Bills

Gandhi continued to tackle particular grievances throughout the region, constantly building upon the program of action outlined in the *satyagraha* campaign of Ahmedabad. By 1919, however, Gandhi's position concerning British colonial rule and the British Raj, or the British Empire in India, had changed. During the First World War, Gandhi had advocated support for the British. The argument that the empire's crisis was India's chance did not appeal to him; he even tried to recruit soldiers for the British Indian Army. When in 1919, however, British authorities insisted on statutes called the Rowlatt Bills, which allowed incarceration without trial of anyone suspected of sedition, Gandhi was not alone in his rage. The Government of India Act No. XI of 1919, as it was entitled, was drafted 'to enable anarchical offenses to be tried expeditiously . . . with no right of appeal'. Under accusation of treasonous intent, anyone could be put away for purposes of preventive detention, and 'dangerous' persons could be held in jail continuously without trial or legal representation in a court of law.[96] A second piece of legislation prohibited possession of seditious documents. Justified for their value in addressing violent crime, the Rowlatt Bills seemed instead to abridge the rights of citizens. Resentment against the bills was deep and intense. The legislation put into question Britain's credibility as a proponent of the rule of law and compromised prospects of constitutional progress. If anything, it seemed to renew Britain's subjugation of India. It also marked a personal watershed in Gandhi's life.

In March 1919, he called for a *hartal* – an extended demonstration or work stoppage – to raise consciousness and give a taste of what a massive general strike might be like. In this case, Gandhi called for a national day of fasting, meetings and suspension of work to take place on 6 April, for purposes of displaying to the British the potential clout of a mass program of noncooperation. It was to be a hint of what lay ahead if colonial authorities did not show more sensitivity toward Indian feelings. This was the beginning of Gandhi's first nationwide *satyagraha* campaign. It originated and was planned at his Sabarmati ashram at Ahmedabad, with the cities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta serving as important centers on the national circuit. By now the leading nationalist figure in India, Gandhi took it upon himself to travel the country, educating citizens about the *satyagraha*, which was designed to lead to withdrawal of the hated legislation. He also created the Satyagraha Sabha, a society of *satyagrahis* in Bombay, to serve as national headquarters since there appeared to be no moves by existing organizations to take up the fight.[97]

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96. Ibid., p. 74.
97. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 174.

The success of the one-day *hartal*, a day of 'humiliation and prayer', was awe-inspiring. A tidal wave of public fasting, mass meetings, processions, closing of shops and work stoppages took place across the expanse of India. In Bombay alone, 600 *satyagrahi* organizers were helping to coordinate the *hartal*. A solemn pledge was published, which declared that until the legislation was withdrawn 'we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws . . . and will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property'. Those who did not fast for twenty-four hours and sign the pledge were not supposed to engage in civil disobedience. Specific laws were designated to be broken, such as the salt-tax law, which prohibited preparation of salt from sea-water. Forbidden books, banned by the British, were read. These included a Gujarati translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and Gandhi's 1909 booklet, *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi also brought out an edition of an unregistered newspaper called *Satyagrahi*. The *hartal* seemed in every way to be ideally planned for maximum effectiveness and minimum animosity.

Unfortunately, in response to violent retaliation by police, including the firing of weapons, the protest, although carefully planned, resulted in violence. In response to police gunfire in Delhi, stone throwing was reported when the *hartal* was mistakenly carried out on the wrong day. In a few places, buildings were set afire and telegraph lines were severed. In the Punjab, both British and Indian officers were killed.[98] Aroused because he believed that various violent incidents, such as pulling up train rails at Nadia and the murder of a government official at Viramgam, did not accurately reflect the essentially peaceful nature of the Indian people, Gandhi felt compelled to define more clearly his call for a national *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills. *Satyagraha*, he declared, 'is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and, unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass Satyagraha.'[99]

Tragedy and violence reverberated across the subcontinent after the *hartal* in the spring of 1919, which was followed by the imposition of martial law in Ahmedabad, Amritsar and Lahore. A violent disturbance occurred at Amritsar on 10 April 1919, following the arrest of two local political leaders. Three days later, on 13 April, a particularly devastating episode occurred when, in a walled garden area closed in by houses on all sides, thousands of unarmed people – mostly peasants from neighboring villages who had come to celebrate a Hindu festival – were fired upon under the orders of Brigadier General Reginald E. Dyer. One of Gandhi's associates, Pyarelal, told the story:

98. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 80.
99. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 467.

Brigadier General Dyer had ordered fire on a peaceful unsuspecting crowd of over 20,000 men, women and children trapped in an enclosure known as Jallianwalla Bagh, killing 379 people and wounding nearly three times that number according to the official estimate.[100]

Two days later, on 15 April, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, governor of the Punjab, imposed martial law. From then on, it was only a matter of time until the British colonial domain in India would come to an end; the question was how.

Gandhiji – a diminutive term of affection – crestfallen and dismayed, confessed to have made a 'Himalayan miscalculation' in having underrated the forces of violence.[101] He used this figure of speech more than once. The catastrophic consequences led him to lose faith in the system administered by the British, one within which he had been trying to work. No justification could explain the disaster. The Indian people as a whole had been disarmed, in 1857–58, after a mutiny against the British; even the deaths of thousands of Indians yearly, who were, as a result, unable to defend themselves against tigers or reptiles, did not alter the colonial determination to keep arms out of Indian hands.[102] The theory of armed struggle and tactics of terrorism were, by the late nineteenth century, not much of a factor in the Indian struggle as directed against the British. This fact, plus British intransigence, lack of remorse over General Dyer's massacre and the negative Muslim reaction to the peace terms that had been offered to Islamic Turkey at the end of the First World War, combined irreversibly to turn Gandhi's feelings against the British. Amritsar was a psychological turning point for modern India and the crux of Gandhi's becoming a determined opponent of the British.[103] The name 'Amritsar' long continued to chill the Indian soul. In addition to the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh, a 'crawling order' forced Indians down on all fours when passing a lane in Amritsar where an English woman had been assaulted. Gandhi was shocked by the humiliation of innocent adult Indians being made 'to crawl like worms on their bellies'; and when he looked at the British, he saw naked 'lawless repression', 'martial law, which meant no law', and special tribunals for 'carrying out the will of an autocrat'.[104]

Some Punjabis, however, blamed Gandhi for the outrage at Amritsar. To his credit, he was introspective about their criticism and unstinting in his own condemnation. He undertook a three-day 'penitential' fast in

100. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1965), p. 5. Pyarelal's figures reflect the government estimate.
101. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 469.
102. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., pp. 182, 183.
103. C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), p. 230.
104. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 471.

atonement, saying he had not grasped that the people were not yet fully ready for a mass movement and that he 'realized that before a people could be fit for offering civil disobedience, they should thoroughly understand its deeper implications'.[105] Deeply troubled and searching for what had gone wrong, Gandhi focused on the use of civil disobedience – an advanced tool for *satyagraha* – because, unlike other methods of noncooperation, laws are broken. Although by 1919 his program combined moral improvement, resistance through noncooperation or civil disobedience and constructive work, it was the question of India's readiness for a national mobilization of civil disobedience that preoccupied him. What differentiates civil disobedience from criminal acts is that it is not secret and the person committing the infraction is willing to accept every and all penalties openly. Grounded in the scrupulous following of the laws of society by one's own free will, the practice of civil disobedience also requires critical intelligence so that each person may be able to discern just laws from those that are unjust. Only after personal confrontation with oneself does a person obtain the right civilly to disobey unjust laws within what Gandhi called 'well-defined circumstances'.[106] At that moment, Gandhi concluded that a national program of the magnitude and scale that would be necessary would not immediately work and would require greater preparation.

It would be hard to argue with Gandhi's assessment except to say that he underestimated the breadth and depth of popular response to his call for national *satyagraha* regarding the Rowlatt Bills. This was the first time that a bid had been made for countrywide resistance and, despite the careful preparations of the organizers, the great majority of Indians who heeded his call had little or no experience with his other experiments. Vast numbers of people were not in positions to understand Gandhi's theory of the power of Truth; they needed to be able to perform complex acts of defiance with complete willingness to suffer the consequences, and they had to be prepared for violent retaliation from the colonial administrators and the police under their control. Plans for dealing with *agents provocateurs*, those who might deliberately try to foment violence, were not in place. Extensive leadership training had not occurred. As the trained *satyagrahis* were put in jail, there were no schooled second- and third-rank leaders to take their places. Furthermore, in retrospect, departures from the principles of nonretaliation were most evident in the places where Gandhi had been forbidden by authorities to go, such as the Punjab. He had not offered a specific appeal in Delhi or the Punjab. In sum, his miscalculation was that he failed to anticipate the extent of popular response; it was not a failure of the principles involved but of the adequacy of preparation.

105. Ibid., pp. 468, 470.
106. Ibid., p. 470.

If anything, despite his personal agony over what had transpired, the Rowlatt *satyagraha* showed that Gandhi had become the major figure on India's national stage. He was capable of exerting an influence far beyond that of any single figure in India's political history. Despite the terms of adulation that had often been heaped upon him, such as *mahatma*, Gandhi's own consciousness always remained rooted in a mentality of experimentation with nonviolence, and he saw himself as readily capable of error. (He preferred the appellation *bapu*, or father.) Much as he was eager to mount organized nonviolent resistance against the British in 1919, he decided against immediate further use of civil disobedience with its intentional breaking of statutes, fearing that it might only inflame the situation. He determined, instead, to educate the populace about his philosophy of power so that it could be applied with more success in the future and to encourage other forms of noncooperation.

The vehicles through which he undertook a massive education program on *satyagraha* were the periodicals *Young India*, an English-language weekly published privately in Bombay, and the Gujarati-language monthly *Navajivan*. These were but two of several publications and journals into which Gandhi during the course of his lifetime poured his soul-searching analyses and admonishments. He became editor of *Young India* and moved it to Ahmedabad, where *Navajivan* was being published. He viewed the opportunities presented by these journals as compensation for the fact that civil disobedience was at the time impossible, because they let him air his views while putting 'heart into the people' during their 'hour of trial'.[107] All of Gandhi's campaigns contained elements of propaganda or communications to spur change in the opponent while solidifying the resolve of the *satyagrahis*. Having intensified his call for Indians to oppose British rule by using their own homemade goods, a practice called *swadeshi*, he called for a national boycott of British-manufactured goods. More significantly, he asked for Indian refusal to cooperate with the institutions operated by the British in India, such as courts of law, legislative bodies, schools and administrative offices. In other words, Indians were to withdraw from the social, educational and judicial systems. Noncooperation methods – of which civil disobedience of 'illegitimate' laws is one of the more advanced types – are diverse and range from suspension of activities to nonconsumption of goods to withdrawal of allegiance. Gandhi's broad and multipronged noncooperation program both rallied and unified Indians, who were still reeling from the impact of martial law. Once again, imprisonment lost its ability to invoke fear. Thousands willingly stepped forward to take their punishment for various acts of noncooperation, and a true mass movement was underway. Shortly thereafter, Gandhi was described by Nehru:

107. Ibid., p. 474.

He was humble but also clearcut and hard as a diamond, pleasant and soft-spoken but inflexible and terribly earnest. His eyes were mild and deep, yet out of them blazed a fierce energy and determination. This is going to be a great struggle, he said, with a very powerful adversary. . . . You must be prepared to lose everything, and you must subject yourself to the strictest nonviolence and discipline.[108]

By the autumn of 1920, Gandhi had become known for writing with 'condensed expression', and his following was so large that he was asked to work on redrafting the constitution of the Indian National Congress.[109] The constitutional reforms overhauled the party so that it was no longer the 'propaganda society' it had been.[110] It became an effective instrument of Indian nationalism. A year and a half later, in February 1922, when his sway was at its greatest and it had become possible to make preparations for a full strategy of civil disobedience on a national level, Gandhi decided to suspend the *satyagraha* campaign, because in a hamlet called Chauri Chaura in the state of Uttar Pradesh some villagers set fire to a police station, burning to death twenty-two police officers who were inside it.[111] Underscoring the magnitude of the breach and the serious deficiencies in his preparation of the people, Gandhi referred to the outbreak of violence as a 'Himalayan blunder' – a phrase that gained currency and is still in use. About 75 percent of India's population of approximately 350 million were living in villages. Numerous individuals had reservations about suspending a national campaign for freedom due to an incident in one out of 700,000 villages or more. Bearing in mind the inadequacy of preparation for the Rowlatt *satyagraha* three years earlier, Gandhi's decision can be seen in a different light. He would not relent and, this time, his insistence on nonviolence registered unforgettably.

Sir George Lloyd, then governor of Bombay, described Gandhi at this time in an interview with the American columnist Drew Pearson:

Just a thin, spindly, shrimp of a fellow was Gandhi! But he swayed three hundred and nineteen million people. . . . He preached nothing but ideals and morals of India. You can't govern a country with ideals! Still that was where he got his grip upon the people. . . . This programme filled our jails. You can't go on arresting people forever . . . not when there are 319,000,000 of them. And if they had taken his next step and refused to pay taxes! God knows where we should have been.[112]

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108. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 53.
109. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 487.
110. Percival Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India, 1740–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 338.
111. Nehru, *Toward Freedom,* op. cit., p. 79; Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 231, 232.
112. Kirby Page, *Is Mahatma Gandhi the Greatest Man of the Age?* (New York, 1930), p. 14, cited in Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 38.

On 10 March 1922, Gandhi was arrested by the British for championing 'disaffection' toward the Raj, or sedition, and was subsequently sentenced to six years in jail. In his educational efforts conducted through publications, he had repeatedly made it known that the ideal noncooperator should seek prison not to embarrass the government but, rather, to transform it by accepting suffering for a just cause. Released early, on 5 February 1924, because acute appendicitis required hospitalization and an operation, Gandhi felt cheated that he had not been able to serve the entire six-year sentence. Believing that prisoners should not be released on medical grounds, he was convinced he ought to have been allowed to complete his sentence which, he thought, might have had maximum potential for changing the way the British thought and acted in India. For the duration of what would have been his six-year term, his criticism of the British was muted, as if he were serving out his sentence voluntarily.

Once out of prison, Gandhi found that whatever unity he had been able to forge between Hindus and Muslims during the years 1920 to 1922 had been shattered. While still in South Africa, Gandhi had concluded that 'there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Musalmans [Muslims]';[113] yet, throughout his life, he tried never to let an opportunity pass to remove obstacles to concord. The expansion of British dominion in India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been more easily accepted by the Hindus, who swiftly replaced the language of their Moghul conquerors with English. Hindus with proficiency in English moved rapidly into banking, industry and commerce and took up administrative positions in the Raj. Muslims, chafing under British rule, instead sought haven within the protection of Islam to express their grievances and lagged behind the Hindus economically. As Muslims lost ground in the growing mercantilism of Indian society, the British were able to exploit the internal divisions between Hindus and Muslims to their own advantage. Other factors exacerbated the communal tension; for example, Muslims accepted the slaughter of cows in a nation that largely favored the animals' protection as sacred in Hindu religious beliefs. A viewpoint favoring separatism had, therefore, secured a strong footing within the Islamic community by the late nineteenth century, and Islamic revivalists by the turn of the century were spurning the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress.[114] Long before Gandhi sought to create a reconciliatory model for independence, the underlying social justice issues of Hindu–Muslim communal discord had become so intertwined with complex questions of political aspiration that a grisly reality was revealed: India had as much capacity for violence as any other culture.

113. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 441.

114. Amalendu De, *Islam in Modern India* (Calcutta: Maya Prakashan, 1982), pp. 11–21.

After his release, Gandhi attempted to draw Hindu and Muslim contestants away from misgivings and fanaticism and tried to turn them toward persuasion and reason. The fortitude required for a national strategy of noncooperation seemed to have evaporated while he was locked up, disunity reigned, and the spirit required for a countrywide campaign had dissipated. When an outbreak of communal wrath occurred in the autumn of 1924, Gandhi undertook a twenty-one day fast to ignite interest in finding a solution based on nonviolence, so that all the parties could once again join in pursuing independence. There was an immediate response to the fast. A 'unity conference' was convened at Delhi with 300 delegates in attendance. Resolutions were passed, freedom for India was affirmed and violence condemned. Gandhi ended his fast.

Although Gandhi sometimes felt unsure about how best to speed the prospects for Indian independence, he spent the next three full years concentrating on nation-building from the bottom up. He traveled the country, speaking constantly of the spinning wheel and demonstrating its use. He wore *khadi* and proposed programs of self-reliance for both men and women. He had also arrived at the point in his life where he was ready to tackle the daunting issue of untouchability.

The Vykom temple *satyagraha*

The participation of women as front-line nonviolent resisters was a remarkable feature of Gandhi's campaigns. India, like many societies, had often treated women badly, yet despite the harsh stereotypes and rigid mores of his place and time, Gandhi at least theoretically considered women to be equal:

> Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things.[115]

In fact, Gandhi called women into service for all of his campaigns. Although numerically not as plentiful as men, the women suffered the adversities of his experiments as did their male counterparts. They undertook boycotts, promoted indigenous industries, rallied for various causes, and accepted the pain and hardship of arrest or government repression. Gandhi called them angels of mercy for their efforts toward *swaraj* and named them the incarnation of *ahimsa*.[116] Gandhi's positive views of women were not inherited, nor were they intuitive. They were the conscious result of his

115. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 4th ed. (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Company, [1933]), p. 423. (Hereafter referred to as *SWMG*.)

116. S. R. Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Non-violence* (New Delhi: Criterion Publications, 1986), pp. 47, 48.

own lifelong personal struggle to reject any ordained or automatic mastery of women by men.

It was not only the cause of women that Gandhi adopted. India had for millennia divided most people into castes. These were categories which, at birth, determined one's path through life and limited every aspect of one's social and occupational status. Gandhi was a member of the *banya* subcaste, belonging to the *vaishya,* or commercial caste, normally classified as third in the hierarchy below the first, the *brahmin*, or priestly caste, and the second, the *kshatriya*, or warrior caste, yet above the *shudras*, or servant and peasant groupings, which comprised the fourth caste.[117] Agriculture and trade were the main occupations of Gandhi's subcaste, and the family name suggests that the Gandhis were grocers originally or sellers of drugs made from vegetables, although the family later rose to high position in state service.[118] Only four castes were defined, while a fifth rung, the *panchama*, the outcaste, included a group that was considered so lowly as to be 'untouchable' or 'unapproachable' and fell entirely outside the caste system.[119] Caste divisions not only prohibited marriage, dining or other social intimacies across caste lines, they also resulted in the outcastes or untouchables being treated as the dross and scum of society, forced into the most menial of jobs, which offered little pay and yet were indispensable to a community, such as the labor of laundresses and sanitation workers. Unless they happened to have been temporarily outcasted for violation of caste rules and were awaiting restitution after appropriate atonement for their offenses, life for an outcaste held no hope of rising in the social scale and offered only the most sordid standard of living. Untouchables sometimes ended up in a condition of indentured servitude, a status that was not until 1976 legally abolished.[120]

Having been pronounced to be from lowly origins was sufficient to deny unapproachables the rights and entitlements granted to others. Although the caste system slowly began to institute itself around 500 B.C., it had taken centuries for it to become the prominent method of social demarcation. As caste became connected to the Hindu Law of Karma (meaning merit, deeds or works) and the notion that one's thoughts, words or acts have consequences in establishing one's status in future rebirths, *karma* came to be understood as the justification for what was happening in one's present life. An ethical justification was thus given for the misery of the outcastes.

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117. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., p. 2.
118. H. S. L. Polak, H. N. Brailsford and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, *Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1949), p. 9.
119. Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'Family Life', in Homer A. Jack (ed.), *The Gandhi Reader: A Source Book of His Life and Writings* (New York: AMS Press, 1956), p. 54.
120. Anima Bose, *Dimensions of Peace and Nonviolence: The Gandhian Perspective* (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1987), p. 134.

Eventually the main castes subdivided into hundreds of subcastes. By the time of Gandhi, there were more than 2,000 restrictive castes across whose lines intermarriage and associations could not occur.[121]

Gandhi initiated a social revolution in India aimed at the provision of basic human rights for the untouchables – rights to use public wells for water, rights to go to school and rights to use the temples for worship. He was not against caste in an absolute sense, and he preferred that persons knew their occupation or profession, just as they knew their sex, because they would then be able to concentrate instead on inner growth and social rehabilitation. He thought that caste could act as a trade union of sorts, protecting them, yet he believed that it should not limit people's possibilities or bind them into economic exploitation.[122] On the other hand, from childhood he had felt abhorrence for the treatment of outcastes and, as a young man, began working to alter the caste system. Human rights start in the crevices of a community, he concluded, in people's homes or where they are employed and, if rights do not have meaning in the smallest of places, they have little significance anywhere else.[123]

By the spring of 1924, Gandhi's position had evolved to the point that he saw the battle against untouchability as necessary in *satyagraha* and a prerequisite to *swaraj*.[124] Untouchability was, he thought, a blight on the Indian soul and self-rule unattainable as long as it disfigured Hinduism.[125] Through the power of print, he led a national campaign aimed at securing fundamental human rights for the outcastes. A highway meandered through the village of Vykom, in the state of Travancore, at the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, a state ruled by a local maharaja, rather than the British, in what is now part of modern Kerala. The road led eventually to the homes of higher-caste Indians, but it touched at one point the quarters of the untouchables. Nearby stood the orthodox temple where the *brahmins*, or priests, worshiped. The outcastes were forbidden to walk where the road passed in front of the temple, and so it had been for centuries. The competition between the noble families and the *brahmins* had, after hundreds of years, evolved to the point where the priests claimed a position more vital than that of the gods.[126] The *brahmins* considered that if the

121. Noss, *Man's Religions,* op. cit., p. 108.
122. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., p. 3.
123. Bose, *Dimensions of Peace and Nonviolence,* op. cit., p. 133.
124. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 54. By 1920, an untouchable couple, Ramijibhai and Gangabehn Badhia, had joined the Sabarmati ashram. They became very close to Gandhi during the 1920s. A skilled weaver, Ramijibhai was called 'Gandhi's guru in *khadi* weaving'.
125. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, 8 vols. (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri & D. G. Tendulkar, 1951–54), Vol. 2, p. 241; cited in Bose, *Dimensions of Peace and Nonviolence,* op. cit., p. 140.
126. Noss, *Man's Religions,* op. cit., pp. 98, 99.

outcastes walked on the road to the orthodox Hindu temple they, the high-caste worshipers, and their gods would be sullied merely by the shadow cast by the unapproachables. Great problems were created for the outcastes because they were, as a result, required to take another circuitous road, out of their way, to reach their homes. Yet the tradition went back so many centuries that even the outcastes saw it as appropriate. An appeal was made to Gandhi by some of the Hindu reformers from the area to lead a movement to change the situation, an effort they hoped would remedy some of the hardships faced by outcastes all over India. Due to an illness, Gandhi declined to take on the management of the campaign, but responded that he would 'guide the movement from afar', that is, from Ahmedabad.[127] He prepared an action plan and sent it back to the village of Vykom with instructions.

The Vykom temple *satyagraha*, as it was called, started when the reformers, who were themselves from the higher castes, declared Vykom's roads to be open to the public. They began their campaign by sauntering down the temple road with their untouchable friends in a procession, reformers leading and untouchables following in files. They passed the outcaste quarters and came to a full stop in front of the temple. Infuriated, the *brahmins* attacked the marchers, beat them severely and turned a number over to the police.

Gandhi proclaimed the issue to be one of justice, with banner headlines across the country.[128] He had his reasons for being pleased to give a local movement publicity and to use it as a specific example with national implications; while Gandhi was eager to prove that nonviolent action could be instrumental on a grand scale, the provincial struggle also showed that his principles and techniques could be effective in helping India address her internal problems, and it proved that anyone could refine his strategy.

The movement was organized and sustained by local leadership. A camp, or *satyagraha* ashram, was set up at the temple road to teach hand-spinning and offer schooling for the families of the fifty or so committed volunteers at the center of the dispute, so that they could sustain a presence around the clock.[129] Lengthy discussions took place at the ashram to help participants understand the point of view of the orthodox temple-goers, so that they might be won over by persuasion; regular prayer meetings were part of camp life. The *satyagrahis* consulted Gandhi, who advised 'a novel form of resistance':

> They stood in front of the police and pleaded with them without interruption. They organized themselves into shifts so that the police were never left unattended.

127. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., pp. 93–5.
128. Gandhi called the issue a just cause. *Young India*, 1 May 1924.
129. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 47.

Consequently, the keepers of the law had to organize themselves into shifts in order to keep the highway patrolled every hour of day and night.[130]

Maintaining their places at the police cordon established by the maharaja's government, the *satyagrahis* stood in a posture of prayer, quietly pleading with the patrols to let them pass. In both good and bad weather, day and night shifts were organized. This continued for months. Passing orthodox Hindus attacked and beat the protesters or insulted them; some demonstrators were arrested and served prison sentences of up to one year. Still, they refused to retaliate.

When arrests occurred, other volunteers stepped forward to replace those detained. During the rainy season, when the road was flooded, the high-caste Hindu reformers and the untouchables maintained their vigil by reducing the number of hours in each shift to three, so that replacements came more frequently. As the monsoon waters reached the shoulders of the protesters, the police guarding the cordon took to boats.[131] Over the sixteen-month campaign, which lasted from the spring of 1924 through the autumn of 1925, the Vykom movement was joined by hundreds, if not thousands, who added their strength. Refusing to compromise, they suffered calmly when ridiculed or arrested. Soon there were too many protesters to arrest and, so, the road was blocked.

In edition after edition, Gandhi filled the pages of *Young India* with commentary read across the breadth of India. The Mahatma began referring to the outcastes as *harijans*, or 'children of God'. When Gandhi unleashed the full force of his opposition to the ruthless practices involved in the caste system, he did so in part by invoking the democratic idealism that he said was inherent in the classical Indian tradition.[132] Gandhi did not actually visit the Travancore movement until April 1925, but when he did, he was able to persuade the authorities that the barricades set up to prevent access to the temple road should come down. The *brahmins* fully expected to be overrun. Yet the volunteers in the *satyagraha* campaign, instead of streaming into the road, held back because they wanted the *brahmins* to be persuaded and the government to lift the ban on using the road before they set foot on it. As the *satyagrahis* restrained themselves through self-discipline, the upper-caste Indians were thrown off balance and won over. Eventually, the *brahmins* yielded and said, 'We cannot resist any longer the prayers that have been made to us, and we are ready to receive the untouchables.'[133] The consequences of the local movement's

130. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 94.
131. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 1: *Power and Struggle* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), p. 83.
132. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 51.
133. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 95.

success were felt across the country, as Gandhi made sure it would through the flow of public information.

Gandhi explained to his readers how the practices associated with the caste system had nothing to do with Britain's imperial rule and derided the violence inherent in shackling people to a life of poverty and shame because of the status decreed for their parents. His frequent exhortations to convert one's opponents rather than to coerce them were ultimately fulfilled in this case, and made even more clear because of the ancient social distance between the *brahmins* and the outcastes. Importantly, he wanted the *brahmins* to understand the injustice represented by their position; his intention was not to create embarrassment but to appeal to their hearts. Furthermore, not only did Gandhi want the untouchables freed from oppression, he also wanted to help them lift themselves up and out of any inward acceptance of the degradation that had been forced upon them. He argued that their debasement corrupted all of India and said that in suppressing one-sixth of the population, all Indians were harmed.[134]

The success of the Vykom movement in a southern provincial corner of India won Gandhi immense support for his ideals, as similar movements elsewhere in India stood up for the same rights. The campaign, which he brought into the limelight, provoked a national debate and was a major turning point in the battle against untouchability. In several parts of the country, areas reserved for upper castes were opened up as a result of the repercussions from the Vykom campaign, and routes and temples formerly closed to the untouchables were made accessible to them. Many orthodox Hindus were, however, critical of Gandhi's efforts and considered his views to be heretical. Still others saw him as a caste Hindu who was manipulating the issue in order to protect the caste system because he had initially condemned intermarriage and interdining. This was the view of B. R. Ambedkar, a leader of the untouchables, who opposed Gandhi and thought his reforms were incomplete. In only a few years, Winston Churchill would describe the Mahatma as a 'seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir [religious ascetic] . . . striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceroyal palace'.[135] Yet in the midst of alternating waves of support and criticism, Gandhi continued his efforts to release India from its pattern of subjugating the untouchables as he sought to transpose their degraded status into an honorable standing.

Looking at the Vykom *satyagraha* against Gandhi's own standards, it was an exemplary model. The Truth was the right of all humans to walk on public roads. The methods used were noncooperation and defiance through nonviolent demonstrations and contravening the unjust tradition. The

134. *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 36, 1970, pp. 153–4.

135. Cited in Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 64, 212 note 3.

campaign was scrupulously nonviolent with the possible exception of the odd effort to scale police barricades. The prayerful stance of the demonstrators offered the strongest possible appeal. Demonstrators did not avoid the consequences of their actions and suffered quietly, including the vicissitudes of monsoons. Even after the cordon was removed, they maintained discipline until they had realized the change in heart they were seeking in their opponents. The opportunity for negotiations was always seized and pursued. While the strength and consistency of the local leadership demonstrated the efficacy of Gandhi's techniques at the provincial level, the hand-spinning in the camp linked the struggle of the untouchables against the caste system to the symbolism of the hand-loomed cloth in the national campaign for independence against the British. A Syrian Christian had been among the early proponents of the Vykom challenge, but the local leaders did their best to make the reforms something that arose from within the higher-caste Hindu community.[136] Although the Travancore leaders produced no literature, Gandhi was able to raise their local fight to a national struggle against the evils of the caste system. Proven was the hypothesis that a minority can accomplish broad results with nonviolent struggle; untouchables would have been crushed had they veered from the nonviolent path. All the rich moral overtones of Gandhi's *satyagraha* technique displayed themselves at Vykom. At no time was Gandhi's hope of persuasion abandoned. He wrote early in the campaign:

> Satyagraha is a process of conversion. The reformers, I am sure, do not seek to force their views upon the community; they strive to touch the heart. . . . It behooves the organisers . . . to set even the most orthodox and the most bigoted at ease and to assure them that they do not seek to bring about the reform by compulsion. . . .[137]

The sympathizers with Gandhi and the cause of the *harijans* were numerous. For them and for the upper-caste Indians who had previously felt little or no responsibility for the lower castes, Gandhi was redefining the issues of freedom, responsibility and nationalism.

The Bardoli peasant *satyagraha*

After the unrest and turmoil that followed the miscalculation regarding the Rowlatt Bills in 1919 and the noncooperation efforts of 1922, a period of reaction set in. As the British colonial administration tightened its bureaucratic fist, youth and labor organizations debated the efficacy of Gandhi's ideas. Books attacked Gandhi, or they defended him. The All-India Trade Union Congress, established in 1921, became a powerful force, and labor unions in different parts of the country began to flex their muscles, push for

136. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 51.
137. *Young India*, 1 May 1924.

workers' rights and organize walkouts and strikes. Textile unions near Bombay, employees of a huge iron works at Jamshedpur, jute workers in Bengal and industrial laborers across the nation were organizing. By the late 1920s, walk-outs and strikes affected numerous industries. Youth organizations were blazing with energy. Any town could be expected to have one or two young men's political organizations. Some were guided by nationalists or socialists, others were radical in outlook, but all were focused on change. Among them were groups that wanted Gandhi to step into the national spotlight once more and to press for independence through a renewed plan for direct action. Others said he should step aside if he was not ready to lead.

Gandhi had by this time concluded that he should present *satyagraha* to India simply as the most expedient option for the achievement of desired goals.[138] He decided to prepare one area of the country as a test for a full-scale national campaign of civil disobedience, and he chose the subdistrict of Bardoli, in Gujarat. The *satyagraha* that occurred in Bardoli in 1928 was highly successful. In it could be discerned the steps of a productive nonviolent campaign including investigation, negotiation, publicity and finally demonstration, essential stages of a Gandhian drive.[139]

The revenue department of the Bombay government had, in 1927, raised the assessment on agricultural land by 22 percent. In numerous cases, however, this resulted in a 60 percent increase. The farmers said they lacked a corresponding rise in incomes from the land, thus, the tax increase was unjust. They petitioned the government to 'appoint an imperial, impartial and independent committee to investigate'.[140] Gandhi assigned two Muslims who had worked with him in South Africa to assist the local leader, a lawyer named Vallabhbhai Patel, in early February 1928, while he proceeded to amplify the campaign nationally – as if through loudspeakers – by his writing and publicity in *Young India*. Several women came from Bombay to help and, in all, more than 200 Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Indian *kaliparaj*, or aborigines, committed themselves to assist the local people. It was obvious that the campaign would be a long one and, therefore, 'a well-controlled but lusty organization was indispensable'.[141] With Bardoli as headquarters, sixteen *satyagrahi* camps were formed that emphasized the constructive program and *khadi*. The wearing of *khadi* became symbolic and functioned like a uniform to unify the *satyagrahis*.

All of Gandhi's experiments had employed the news media and the printing press in one way or another, but the six-month Bardoli campaign

138. Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle,* op. cit., p. 326.
139. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., pp. 15–60.
140. Ibid., p. 96.
141. Ibid.

made perhaps the most significant use of information as an integral part of its strategy. Daily news bulletins were published from a main publicity bureau in Bardoli and, eventually, 14,000 circulars were printed in order to spread news of the *satyagraha* throughout the towns and villages of the province. Opposition to the revenue department's formal report was published, laying out arguments that the farmers would not be able to pay the increased assessment. Petitions were collected and conferences held. Patel accepted the presidency of a peasants' convocation on 4 February 1928, and began corresponding with appropriate authorities in the Bombay government, announcing the refusal of the agricultural workers to pay the assessment until either the old amount was accepted as full payment or an impartial tribunal was convened to investigate the injustice.[142] Patel's speeches were often printed word for word in the national newspapers. The skillful use of public information helped the morale of those working inside the Bardoli campaign.

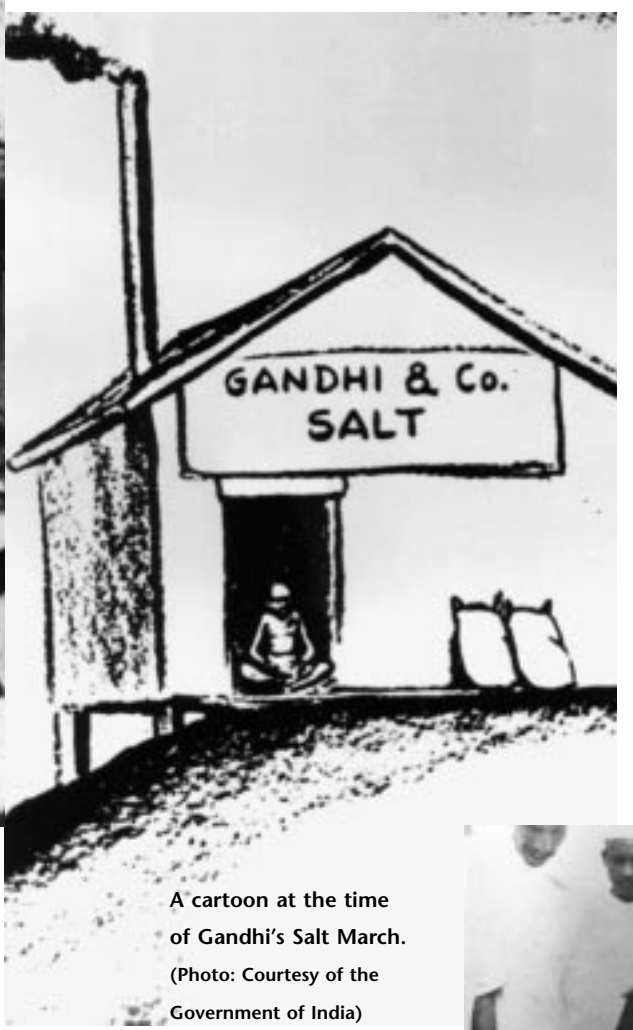
Mass meetings were held and preparation was extensive and, judging from the wholesome outcome, effective. Ballads were written and songs composed about *satyagraha*, traveling choirs went from village to village in bullock carts to extol nonviolent direct action, and handbills were distributed which described successful nonviolent struggles.[143]

The Bardoli *satyagraha* proceeded with meticulous discipline through Gandhi's steps for a campaign based on the power of Truth, and most of the 87,000 persons living in the *taluka*, or subdistrict, became directly involved. Volunteers were guided by 200 captains, who also kept headquarters informed. Truth in this instance was the conviction that the assessment for the land tax was unjust – a problem that affected much of the peasantry in India – and the unfair levy gave the local struggle in Bardoli nationwide resonance. Whenever revenue collectors arrived, the peasant farmers used the tactic of reading aloud from Patel's speeches or made arguments against the unfairness of the levy. At the core of their action was the refusal to pay. They also sought to prod the village tax collectors to resign from their jobs. The government retaliated by flattery, bribery and inciting one committee against another. The peasants, however, stuck to the plan. Minor officials at the village and hamlet levels began to resign from their jobs in solidarity and protest. Farmers were emboldened and courted arrest, sometimes following behind the revenue collectors. The campaign remained an almost pristine model of nonviolent resistance, and the strict discipline of the peasant volunteers could not be broken. Yet, as the agriculturalists persisted in refusing to pay the newly hoisted tax, the Bombay government instituted harsh measures:

142. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., pp. 53–7.

143. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 97.

Gandhi addressing a meeting during one of the breaks en route to Dandi during the 1930 Salt March. The crowd is as dense on the bridge overhead as on the ground.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)



A cartoon at the time of Gandhi's Salt March.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi bends to pick up salt crystals at Dandi on 6 April 1930, thus breaking the Salt Law and formally inaugurating a national movement of civil disobedience.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

> The Satyagrahi farmers were fined and imprisoned . . . publicly flogged and dragged through the streets. . . . Soon there was no more room in the government jails. . . . The government began to seize the property of the farmers. All household goods which they could lay their hands on were taken out of the homes and sold. Cattle were driven out of the barnyards and dispatched to outside markets and to slaughter houses. Practically every inch of the peasants' land was forfeited, and over 14,000 acres of it were sold at auction.[144]

As physical violence, land expropriation and seizure of items from buffaloes to carts continued, the suffering became unbearable. Patel advocated an ancient form of resistance based on the Prophet Muhammad's migration, or *hijra*, from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.[145] Patel called for *hijra*, which in this context meant the wholesale abandonment of the peasants' places of abode.[146] The majority of the Bardoli peasants picked up their few possessions and left the district to live in the state of Baroda – an adjacent princely state in Gujarat that was not directly under British rule – carrying whatever belongings they could. The Bombay government came to a halt after its stunned realization that almost no one was left to be governed.

Persuasion had been attempted as the first course. Systematic efforts had been tried – petitions, public assemblies, delegations – to put the grievances of the peasantry before the authorities. Patel often reiterated his hopes that a mutually satisfactory solution could be found. Religious and communal differences mattered not at all because of the shrewdness with which the caste, occupational and religious communities in Bardoli worked together and preempted any efforts by opponents to divide them. Large demonstrations or processions were not needed in Bardoli. For five and a half months, the community used nonviolent sanctions from the broad category of noncooperation. These included two techniques of social

144. Ibid., p. 98.

145. On the Indian subcontinent, contact with millions of Muslims had familiarized Hindus with the concept of *hijra*, or emigration in protest, derived from an Arabic term meaning to abandon, to break or sever ties, or to migrate. The practice originates with early Islam as a Muslim doctrine that obliges migration from lands where adherence to Islam is restricted or forbidden, as Muslim identity was to be safeguarded and expressed. When the time came for the Prophet's move to Medina, no Muslim was supposed to remain behind in Mecca, the only exceptions being the 'weak'. Muhammad Khalid Masud, 'The Obligation to Migrate: The Doctrine of *Hijra* in Islamic Law', in Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 30, 33.

146. 'My advice to migrate is for all who feel oppressed and cannot live without losing self-respect in a particular place.' Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 255, cited in Thomas Merton (ed.), *Gandhi on Non-Violence: A Selection from the Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964), p. 37.

noncooperation – ostracism and social boycott – against farmers who would not join the movement and government officials, making it hard for them to lead normal lives when everyone else was engaged in struggle. One of the most drastic tools of noncooperation – civil disobedience – was restricted to the plowing and replanting of land that had been attached and the building of huts or camping on forfeited land, particularly by women volunteers.[147] All the while, the constructive program met essential needs. The public information campaign was so successful that accounts of government-administered atrocities created an uproar. Delhi, the capital of India, was split into two camps regarding the recommended response to *satyagraha*. By August 1928, Patel and the other *satyagraha* leaders reached agreement with the Bombay government on the farmers' demand for an impartial inquiry into the unjust assessment. Nearly half a year of intense protracted struggle had brought the Bombay government to grant virtually every one of the peasant farmers' demands.[148]

The success of the Bardoli *satyagraha* helped to eclipse the traumas from the massacre and violent retaliations of 1919 and salved the wounds of those who had condemned themselves, as had Gandhi, or those who had uncharitably rebuked him. What could not work in 1919, or 1922, however, might succeed in 1930. The stage was set for a major drive down the road to independence.

The Salt March

In December 1928, Gandhi attended the session of the Indian National Congress Party, in Calcutta, where he took the initiative and moved a critical resolution that demanded dominion status for India, within one year, under threat of a national nonviolent campaign for full independence.[149] The British did not comply. Back in the thick of national politics at the end of 1929, Gandhi saw with prescience that the timing might be right for mounting broad resistance against the British. He pressed for the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as the president of the Congress Party, in lieu of himself.[150] He felt that strong leadership was needed to gain the confidence of the growing youth associations and the ripening trade unions. The labor movement was flexing its muscles and strikes were taking place from Bombay to Bengal. The Bardoli success was invigorating local *satyagrahas* in other states, such as Gujarat and Maharashtra. The Congress dropped the notion of dominion status and, going further, called for independence. Drafted by Gandhi on 10 January 1930, its 1929 declaration stated:

147. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., pp. 62, 63.
148. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 100.
149. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 279.
150. Ibid., p. 286.

> The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. . . . Therefore . . . India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence.

The declaration brought the question of complete and total independence to the forefront. The celebration of 'Independence Day' was set for 26 January 1930. To achieve its new goal of full independence, the Congress authorized civil disobedience and prepared to put Gandhi in charge. He agreed to lead a campaign of civil disobedience as long as it remained nonviolent, but he determined to institute the program slowly, in a graduated fashion, and said that he would work out the plans in advance but not reveal them until he was ready. He secluded himself to prepare the design, and it was announced that a national civil disobedience program would soon begin. Nehru described the mood of the country:

> As civil disobedience approached and electrified the atmosphere, our thoughts went back to the movement of 1921–22 and the manner of its sudden suspension after Chauri Chaura. The country was more disciplined now, and there was a clearer appreciation of the nature of the struggle. . . . From Gandhiji's point of view, it was fully realized by everyone that he was terribly in earnest about non-violence. . . . For he firmly believed that it was a universal and infallible method.[151]

First in Gandhi's plan of attack were the Salt Laws, which penalized the poorest Indians. The Salt Laws provided for a government monopoly on a necessity and placed a tax on something essential for life. The law made it illegal to prepare salt from sea-water, as it would deny the British colonial government its tax. Gandhi chose the objective of removing these laws as the basis for a civil disobedience movement not only because of the fundamental injustice they represented, but also because the Salt Laws stood as an emblem of an unpopular and unrepresentative foreign government. The Salt *satyagraha* was to be part of a year-long civil-disobedience movement in 1930 and 1931, undertaken as part of the political program of the Indian National Congress for independence. The Congress passed a resolution delegating to Gandhi the power and responsibility for organizing the campaign; Bombay became one of the main centers but *satyagraha* activities were planned for every province. The strong secondary levels of leadership, which had not been in evidence at the time of the 1919 *hartal* against the Rowlatt Bills, were well prepared by 1930. Nehru, as president of the party, was empowered to act on behalf of an executive committee in the event that it could not convene; he was also given regional responsibilities, as were other leaders such as Vallabhbhai Patel of Bardoli fame, Satish Chandra Das Gupta, Konda Venkatappaya, Gopabandhu Chowdhury and

151. Nehru, *Toward Freedom,* op. cit., p. 156.

Rajagopalachariar.[152] There was a similar distribution of powers in provincial and local committees, as Nehru wrote:

> Secrecy was not encouraged by us, as we wanted to keep our struggle a perfectly open one. . . . All our leading men and women at the center, as well as in the provinces and in local areas, were bound to be arrested. Who was there to carry on? The only course open to us was, after the fashion of an army in action, to make arrangements for new commanders to be appointed as the old ones were disabled.[153]

Extensive debates and deliberations took place within the Congress and in public meetings. On the same day that Gandhi was named to be in charge, an All-India Congress Committee, meeting at Ahmedabad, drafted a pledge for those volunteering to join the *satyagraha.* It called for them to swear to the attainment of *purna swaraj*, or complete independence, by all peaceful and legitimate means, to accept readiness to be imprisoned and to obey all orders. Training courses were regularly offered on direct action for the *satyagrahis*, especially in techniques of crowd control.

On 2 March 1930, ten days before the actual start of any action, Gandhi had written to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, summarizing the grievances of the people and advising him of the planned actions. He said that it was his purpose to release the 'intensely active force' of nonviolence against the 'organized violent force of the British rule', and he urged a negotiated settlement. He encouraged further discussion and affirmed that his letter was not a threat but the 'simple and sacred duty . . . of a civil resister'. The minimum requirements were laid out and the maximum period of time suggested. The people were to wait in a noncommittal state of preparedness while the letter was given a chance to work, but the Viceroy's answer was lamentably unsatisfactory.[154]

On 12 March, in the opening phase of the campaign, Gandhi set out on a 241-mile march from Ahmedabad to the sea coast at Dandi on the Gulf of Cambay, having selected a motley group of seventy-eight adherents.[155] All of them were seasoned *satyagrahis* from the Sabarmati ashram. They were flinty, prepared for the rigors of twenty-four days of marching on foot, and could endure almost any provocation to their nonviolent discipline without retaliation. They were drawn from different segments and strata of Indian society.[156] Vallabhbhai Patel had been selected

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152. Ibid., p. 157; Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., pp. 89, 90.
153. Nehru, *Toward Freedom,* op. cit., p. 158.
154. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., pp. 122, 123.
155. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 292–3.
156. Rao, *Gandhi in the Global Village,* op. cit., p. 10. Among the seventy-eight specially selected volunteers was the untouchable Ramijibhai Badhia, his son and his son-in-law. Gandhi considered Ramijibhai an 'exemplary freedom fighter'. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 54.

to choose the route and had traveled its length, advising villagers along the way on the power of Truth, encouraging them to take up constructive work, preparing them for civil disobedience, and alerting them that Gandhi would be leading a disciplined file of marchers.[157] 'Realizing that millions of men and women were depending on our leader', wrote Krishnalal Shridharani, a participant whose account would later influence leaders in the American civil rights movement, 'we strained to do his bidding like greyhounds on a leash.'[158] Wearing a modest garment of *khadi*, Gandhi led, 'tramping with his pilgrim band to the sea'.[159] As they proceeded south through the countryside, anyone could see that *khadi* had replaced mill-woven fabric, as the wearing of hand-spun clothing had become the uniform for the Congress and those pledged to civil disobedience. The diverse group of seventy-nine swelled to thousands. Gandhi walked in stride, 'staff in hand, marching along at the head of his followers, with firm step and a peaceful but undaunted look'.[160]

For months the volunteers had rehearsed their defiance of the laws, to make themselves more efficient and able to handle large crowds. As 6 April approached – the eleventh anniversary of the *hartal* that had inflamed General Dyer into the wanton killings in Jallianwalla Bagh at Amritsar in 1919, Gandhi's firm-footed pace brought him and the throng to Dandi a full twenty-four hours early, at 8:30 a.m. on 5 April. He used the gain in time to build suspense and to brief the corps of international news correspondents and journalists that had gathered there in watchful readiness. On 6 April 1930, Gandhi stepped forward at Dandi beach to begin his act of civil disobedience, violating the Salt Laws by evaporating sea-water to obtain salt crystals. He declared to the entourage that it was up to anyone who was willing to risk prosecution to do the same. The entire nation was called upon to engage in civil disobedience and violate the Salt Laws. The next day, India broke all of its pretexts and protocols of polite colonial ambiguity. Open defiance sundered community and state. In villages and crossroads all over the country, people got out tin pots and made 'some unwholesome stuff', yet the quality did not matter; 'the main thing was to commit a breach of the obnoxious salt law', recalled Nehru:

> As we saw the abounding enthusiasm of the people and the way salt-making was spreading like a prairie fire, we felt a little abashed and ashamed for having questioned the efficacy of this method when it was first proposed by Gandhiji. And we marveled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitude and make it act in an organized way.[161]

157. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence,* op. cit., p. 91.
158. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 10.
159. Nehru, *Toward Freedom,* op. cit., p. 157.
160. Ibid., p. 159.
161. Ibid., p. 160.

In coordination with the Salt *satyagraha*, the national boycott of imports, especially of British goods, was virtually complete. Dramatic demonstrations occurred in violation of prohibitions and injunctions. Although Hindus constituted most of the *satyagrahis*, Muslims also participated. Shops closed. Public meetings were organized in contravention of orders banning them. Pickets appeared at the iron grills of British banks, insurance firms, mints and bullion exchanges. As the national press was forbidden to report news regarding government repression, the *satyagrahis* produced their own leaflets and appeals and, because these were regarded as revolutionary, they were avidly passed from hand to hand. Graffiti appeared on stuccoed walls; paved streets served as blackboards. Pedestrians skillfully made their way around messages chalked on the sidewalks. Women turned out in enormous numbers, including large processions solely comprised of women in many cities.[162]

Mass arrests were instituted, as anticipated, by the British who unleashed their full repressive powers. Nehru was locked up on 14 April, and his father took his place in the leadership. Ranking leaders everywhere were rounded up, only to be replaced by their surrogates as planned. Congress offices were closed and deemed illegal. When the detention centers were filled to overflowing, police charged with *lathis* – long wooden batons, often tipped with metal – on peaceful demonstrators. Eyewitness accounts told of 'inhuman cruelties' in jails, and 'firing on unarmed crowds became a common spectacle'.[163] Pleaded one participant to the judge in Jabalpur, in an act of exuberance, 'Give me all you can, because if you don't, I'll be here again and for the same reason.'[164] As repressive measures were inflicted by the British, other noncooperation strategies were brought into play by the *satyagrahis*, such as boycotting state-owned post offices, telegraph lines, trams and shipping companies. Instead of Britain's ensign, the Union Jack, India's national flag was unfurled.

Gandhi wrote a second letter to the Viceroy in early May, explaining that he intended to proceed to the Dharasana government salt works and demand possession of the installation. He declared that removal of the salt tax would eliminate the necessity for this action. Again, the response was unsatisfactory. This may have been the first instance of 'aggressive civil disobedience' by Gandhi, a differentiation that he had spoken of previously but had not actually used. The plan to raid and in a sense capture the salt depots was an elaborate offensive strategy without specific provocation and, as the 1930 campaign continued, there were other uses of such aggressive civil disobedience. Gandhi's continued encouragement of organized defiance got him arrested on 5 May and, just after midnight, following his

162. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 123.
163. Ibid., p. 125.
164. Ibid., p. 11.

incarceration, *satyagrahis* marched to occupy the Dharasana government salt pans. In some instances, they implored police to join them; indeed, some police officers refused to carry out the orders of their superiors. The journalist Webb Miller described the jiu-jitsu phenomenon in his eyewitness account filed with the New York *Telegram*:

> Dharasana Camp, Surat District, Bombay Presidency, May 22 (by mail). . . . Amazing scenes were witnessed yesterday when more than 2,500 Gandhi 'volunteers' advanced against the salt pans here in defiance of police. . . . Much of the time the stolid native Surat police seemed reluctant to strike. It was noticeable that when the officers were occupied on other parts of the line the police slackened, only to resume threatening and beating when the officers appeared again. I saw many instances of the volunteers pleading with the police to join them.[165]

The 1930 campaign was nothing less than spectacular. If the British did not have a change of heart, they would be compelled to change. Although Gandhi did not like to use the words *compel* or *compulsion*, the Salt *satyagraha* was a supreme example of nonviolent pressure, all the time without a spirit of vengeance or revenge. Although initially restrained, particularly as the *satyagrahis* were openly courting jail terms, the British response camouflaged harsh tactics of repression to come. Nonetheless, the overriding message sent from the Indians to the British government was one of united determination. More than 60,000 individuals submitted themselves to prison. According to Krishnalal Shridharani's firsthand narrative:

> No less than 17,000 women . . . underwent various terms of imprisonment. Thousands were wounded and hundreds killed. Despite this 'reign of terror', the people of India displayed a remarkable degree of restraint and non-violent discipline. What is more important, slaughter and mutilation failed to repress the movement or intimidate the people. On the contrary, it exhausted the government itself. . . . After a full year of struggle, the government gave in and began negotiating with the Congress high command. Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee of the Congress were released from jail and the former was invited to Delhi.[166]

Once in the capital, Gandhi was invited to be the official guest of the British Government during a three-month sojourn in Britain toward the close of 1930. He chose, instead, to stay at Kingsley Hall, the home of the British pacifist leader Muriel Lester, a key figure in the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).[167] In London, he attended the Round Table

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165. Cited in ibid., p. 41.
166. Ibid., p. 126.
167. Eileen Egan, 'Foreword', in Richard Deats (ed.), *Ambassador of Reconciliation: A Muriel Lester Reader,* op. cit., p. ix. Gandhi wrote to Lester, with whom he had developed a friendship when she traveled to India in 1926, 'Of course I would rather stay at Kingsley Hall than anywhere else in London, because there I shall be among the same sort of people as those to whom I have devoted my life.' Having grown up in a

Conference convened by Lord Irwin and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. The meeting ended on 19 January 1931. Back in Delhi, after direct negotiations with Lord Irwin from 17 February to 4 March, Gandhi allowed a truce and ended the civil disobedience campaign. The government made some concessions in a treaty called the 'Gandhi–Irwin Pact', and further negotiations ensued.

From the point of view of Indian independence, however, the round-table session was disappointing. Following a change of government in Britain, a second session of the round table met, and upon returning from the London meeting to Bombay in December 1931, Gandhi found that his agreement with Lord Irwin had broken down. The bureaucracy was not disposed to carrying out the pact; indeed, a new intransigence showed itself on the government side, as if to say that conciliation had produced few dividends and that a tough stand was the best way to weaken militancy. Gandhi revived *satyagraha* and was soon back in jail under Lord Willingdon, who had succeeded Lord Irwin. Gandhi called for the resumption of an array of civil disobedience measures against the colonial authorities. The 1932 civil disobedience campaign, however, lacked the extensive preliminary preparations of the 1930 struggle that was initiated by the Salt March. The British did their best to keep Gandhi isolated and sought to nullify his influence, but without much success. When released, Gandhi continued his exchanges with the British and seemed constantly to be moving in and out of jail. Numerous British officials questioned Gandhi's beliefs and even his motives. A few were sympathetic, yet they were not certain of his ability to retain control once the civil disobedience campaigns had been touched off. By April 1932, the number of political prisoners was 34,458, approximately half that in 1930; by July, it had dropped to 4,683, making it appear to its critics that the popular movement had dissipated, allowing the government to claim victory.[168] Moreover, while the Gandhian strategy may have ultimately been persuasive in its nonviolent techniques, the country was not completely free of stray violent incidents, such as an arsenal raid in Chittagong in April 1930 by a group of 'revolutionaries' who did not believe in nonviolence. Gandhi condemned these lapses. During the various campaigns of civil disobedience, the British response was invariably to revert to such measures as *lathi* charges to disperse processions, scattered gunfire and destruction of movable property. By 1933, the British let themselves believe that the fire fueling the civil disobedience movement had been doused.

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privileged family, Lester became a social worker and established Kingsley Hall in the Bow district of London's East End. For over three decades, she was a traveling secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, of which more will be said in Chapters Two and Three. Muriel Lester, 'With Gandhi in India and at Kingsley Hall', in Deats (ed.), *Ambassador of Reconciliation,* op. cit., p. 140.

168. Spear, *Oxford History of Modern India, 1740–1947,* op. cit., p. 354.

While in prison in September 1932, Gandhi embarked on a fast to protest the incorporation of separate electorates for untouchables in the new constitution that was being framed for India. The fast stirred the public and refocused attention on the age-old problem of untouchability. An agreement was reached that modified the electoral system for untouchables, thus avoiding a further disruptive factor in India's body politic. The fast became the starting point for a major social campaign on the issue of untouchability. From jail, Gandhi began the publication of a weekly paper called *Harijan* to carry on this crusade. Having ended one fast, he embarked on another on 8 May 1933, which lasted for twenty-one days, for the same cause. In an effort to end the cat-and-mouse game being played by the government, he decided to stay out of jail so as to continue his work for the untouchables. He announced his decision to forswear civil disobedience for the rest of the unexpired term of his jail sentence from which he had been prematurely released. He had been ill while in prison and, when discharged for medical reasons, he continued to serve his term voluntarily, although no longer behind bars. Ultimately, untouchability would be declared illegal in the constitution of free India. A resolution was passed by India's Constituent Assembly, in 1947, making the practice of untouchability illegal. It was an historic decision that the *New York Times* and others compared with the abolition of slavery.

Return to the village

Constructive work

Gandhi felt it necessary to retire from the Indian National Congress in October 1934, after concluding that many members of the party possessed only a tactical understanding of nonviolence and were viewing *satyagraha* through the lens of political expediency. While they had been won over by the massive national noncooperation and civil disobedience campaigns Gandhi had organized in the previous two decades, he thought they failed to grasp the fuller meaning of nonviolence and had not accepted it as a fundamental tenet. He was correct in his perception. Most of Gandhi's senior colleagues, such as Nehru and members of the Congress Working Committee, saw nonviolence not as a spiritual or ethical conviction but as a practical method for the achievement of the political goal of independence. For the adoption of nonviolence as a policy by those who did not share Gandhi's religious persuasions, at a minimum, Gandhi believed, *satyagrahis* had to observe abstention from hatred and physical and even verbal violence. Certainly, no mass movement could be constructed on the basis of nonviolence as a creed, as Gandhi knew.[169] Yet he was dismayed that even the more pragmatic

169. B. R. Nanda, telecopier-facsimile message to the author on *satyagraha* and nonviolence as policy, New Delhi, 6 October 1995.

dimensions of nonviolence were slow in taking hold and violence seemed to be simmering just beneath the surface.

Gandhi determined that more discipline was needed and chose to work on the deficit by suspending civil disobedience and substituting the 'constructive program'.[170] He thought it important that those pursuing a nonviolent struggle keep themselves usefully engaged; 'constructive work' could be for them what arms were for the violent.[171] He called for a period in which individual civil disobedience would be suspended throughout the country, to be carried out only by Gandhi himself if he felt circumstances dictated. He wanted the populace to take up the constructive program with the determination accorded the civil disobedience movement. While civil disobedience may have been lifted, *satyagraha* in its wider sense was not. Many, unfortunately, could not see the value of such an approach. Constructive work was not as colorful or exciting as civil disobedience; it called for immense self-discipline, public spirit and dedication, so it was, therefore, not popular.[172]

Gandhi returned his focus to the village and, in 1936, moved to the small hamlet of Sevagram, near Wardha, in the state of Maharashtra. From this central location close to Nagpur, he would spearhead efforts to improve the lives of provincial villagers living in rural India. Once again, he was propounding the wearing of *khadi* and hand-spinning, rural education, cottage industries and the fight against untouchability. Harris Wofford – an American educator who would be instrumental in the 1959 visit of the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr to India, as we shall see in Chapter Two – would later describe Gandhi's village interlude following a trip to Sevagram:

> Gandhi picked the poorest village he could find in the poorest district of India to make his home. There he said he would prove that his constructive program could transform that village from a pile of muck and hungry people into a little republic of cleanliness, beauty, and self-government. . . . Sevagram, which means Service-Village, . . . in his lifetime was the unofficial capital of India.[173]

Gandhi's views on democracy and decentralization led him to emphasize strategies that kept people close to their land. India, in the mid-1930s, was but 15 percent urbanized. In Gandhi's eyes, industrialized societies tended to become hierarchical, with pyramids of inequality. Under such

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170. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 367.
171. Mohandas K. Gandhi, fragment of letter to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, after 18 September 1940, *Harijan*, 18 January 1942. Also see Chapter Four.
172. Nanda, telecopier-facsimile memorandum to author, op. cit.
173. Harris Wofford, 'Gandhi: The Civil Rights Lawyer', reprint of speech, Hampton Institute, Virginia, 10 November 1955, p. 9. The speech was passed to Martin Luther King Jr.

circumstances, the threat of militarism would increase, he thought, whereas a nonviolent society could more inherently be a democracy. Self-contained villages could better withstand the ravages of dictators or military machines and be maintained through cooperative efforts.

In 1937, a new Indian constitution – 'a substantial if unsatisfactory result of the nationalist struggle' passed by the British Parliament – came into force.[174] It fell far short of the demands of the Indian National Congress and was 'as impressive for the powers it conferred . . . as for those it withheld'.[175] Nonetheless, Gandhi saw the opportunity to make constructive gains for the rural poor of India. Unfortunately the political barometer rose, as Muslims expressed their alienation from the Congress. Despite Gandhi's inclusive approach, exemplified by his readings from the Qur'an at prayer meetings, some Muslim leaders had felt estranged from the earlier civil disobedience campaigns. They feared that the success of the overall noncooperation strategy would result in a Hindu Raj in place of British rule.[176] The distance between Hindus and Muslims widened. In retrospect, Gandhi's sincere efforts to reach into the popular psyche and his canny ability to invoke the symbols and language of Hinduism, so important for the mass awakening, were a vulnerability where the Muslims were concerned.[177]

The Calcutta fast

In the face of the looming threat of a second world war, Gandhi exhorted the people to take a stand against military preparations based on violent defense. He favored opposition to aggression, yet with 'nonviolent arms', and vigorously debated the question with the Congress Working Committee. In late 1939, Gandhi thought the party should have a clear policy on nonviolent resistance to armed invasion. He maintained that such defense – on a national basis – would be more potent and of substantially less material cost than a conventional military defense policy.[178] His call for 'war without violence', as Krishnalal Shridharani entitled his pivotal book, was little heeded. With the outbreak of hostilities, Gandhi continued to argue against fighting violence with violence, although he later recognized that millions of casualties might have resulted from a Japanese invasion of

174. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 127.

175. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 384.

176. From 1920 to 1921, Gandhi had toured India in the company of the Muslim leader Shaukat Ali, naming him his 'brother'. By the time of the Salt March in 1930, however, Ali denounced the civil disobedience and urged a boycott because of this Muslim fear. Notwithstanding Gandhi's inclusivism, most Muslims – with the exception of those in the North-West Frontier Province – withdrew throughout the Salt *satyagraha,* a bitter loss in view of what was to come. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 119, 120.

177. Ibid.

178. Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* op. cit., pp. 131–98.

India, an assault that even well-prepared civilian defense might not have repelled. The Indian National Congress declared that it would support Britain in return for self-rule. In 1940, after the fall of France, with the Congress Party's offer of cooperation with the British, it in effect severed its relations with Gandhi. When Britain equivocated on the transfer of power to Indian hands, the Congress backed down from its offer of assistance and beckoned once again to Gandhi to lead a campaign of civil disobedience. Rather than set out on a massive operation, Gandhi selected individual volunteers to carry out the endeavor so as to minimize excitement and allow him to continue promoting the constructive program. This pared-down movement began on 17 October 1940. As *satyagrahis* were arrested, new followers were chosen to take their place. By May 1941, despite Gandhi's restraint, convictions for acts of individual civil disobedience numbered 25,069.[179]

With the entry of Japan into the war, Gandhi advocated nonviolent strategies of national defense and argued that India should reject military preparedness and strategies in favor of defending her sovereignty by popular nonviolent resistance. He still believed that civilian defense, although costly in human life, would entail no more losses than would military defense, while being more practical and effective.[180] His suggestions were not as well developed as they might have been, and they were greeted with uncertainty; many in the Congress Party were willing to admit the moral superiority of nonviolence as a system against colonialism, but they were skeptical about formulating it into methods of civilian defense against external military aggression. Gandhi feared that the British would not be able to defend India against the Japanese onslaught, unless they secured the cooperation of the Indian people, and this cooperation could be effective only when the people were inspired by the feeling that they were equal partners with the British in the joint struggle against the Axis Powers. Gandhi raised the slogan 'Quit India', to express the challenge of Indian nationalism to British imperialism.[181] Critics feared that Gandhi's proposal would expose India to a Japanese invasion. On the other hand, Gandhi believed that the people of India would come together in the crisis and fight nonviolently for their country based on their collective experience with noncooperation measures.

Under great pressure, Gandhi broke from one of the driving principles of his life and agreed to the Congress Party's approach to the war. The Congress waited for a response to its request for the immediate withdrawal of the British, with the understanding that if none was forthcoming, the 'Quit India' demand would be made. In August 1942, a resolution was

179. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 445.
180. Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* op. cit., p. 188.
181. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 459.

passed by the All-India Congress Committee, and Gandhi called upon the people of India to act as free men and women. Within hours, Gandhi and virtually the entire leadership of the Indian National Congress were arrested by the British authorities, who reacted peremptorily and tried to crush the Congress. As news of the arrests spread, violent outbursts erupted in many of the provinces, and the British resorted to their battalion of customary measures: gunfire, *lathi* charges and mass arrests. The chasm between nationalist India and Britain widened irrevocably.

Upon his release from jail in 1944, Gandhi found himself again becoming the symbol of Indian nationalism. He took up the effort to break the deadlock between the Congress and the British that had begun while he was in jail. Finding the British cold to his efforts, he turned to Muslim leaders who were advocating a separate state.[182] Bitter controversies raged in the subcontinent as the Muslim League put forward a two-nation theory and proposed the secession of the Muslim-majority areas in the northwest and northeast and the formation of a new state to be called Pakistan. Gandhi believed that a division of the country was in the interest of neither the Muslims nor the non-Muslims and boded ill for the future of the subcontinent. During the war, when the Congress Party was on a collision course with British rule, Muslim separatism gathered strength, and Hindu–Muslim relations suffered a serious setback.

In 1946, three-way negotiations were stepped up among leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League under Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and the British Government. Unfortunately, during this period, there was an eruption of communal violence and rioting. Gandhi offered the idea of *shanti sena*, or peace brigades, to help quell any riots. His offers for a militant but nonviolent presence of unarmed civilians trained to prevent further unrest fell on deaf ears. When riots and violence broke out, he traveled on his own, seeking to act as a soothing force. He began to blame himself for the failure of nonviolence to take hold in India. Now 78 years old, Gandhi reacted to these woeful developments not simply as a failure but as *his* failure.

Nothing less than civil war seemed to ravage Calcutta, the capital of Bengal. 'The Terror', as it was termed, lasted from August 1946 to September 1947. It was not a revolt of the disorganized or disaffected. With the imminent partition of India into two states, the fanaticism and extremism gaining momentum seemed to have ties to organized groups. The chaos of mob violence added to the mix. The Muslims of Calcutta by now had learned that they were not to be part of the new state of Pakistan, but were unsure of their fate. The emotion of fear that Gandhi so presciently understood to be psychologically linked to hatred, and which he had spent

182. Ibid., p. 478.

so much of his life attempting to replace with self-respect and discipline, now filled the air in Calcutta. When the Muslim League set 16 August as 'Direct Action Day', and called for a *hartal*, a corner was turned and descent into the madness of communal rage really began. In Bengal, the day was declared a public holiday by Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the Muslim chief minister of the state. 'The Great Calcutta Killing', as the events of 16 August 1946 would later be called, actually lasted for four days and, when the tragedy had ended, 4,000 persons had been killed and 11,000 injured.[183] No political entity or leader would accept responsibility. The Congress pronounced that the Muslims had started the slaughter, but the Bengal Muslim League declared that peace-loving Muslims were stoned. The violence in Calcutta could not be stayed. Convulsions of bloodshed soon reached eastern Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab. By March 1947, riots had become a chronic state of affairs. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, cajoled Gandhi and Jinnah into signing a joint appeal for peace. When Gandhi sensed that Calcutta still remained impervious to such polite blandishments for calm, he threatened to use his most climactic weapon, to be employed when all else had failed – he warned he might undertake a fast unto death.

The Mountbatten Plan was drawn up with the provision for the British to transfer power to the two states, India and Pakistan, on 15 August 1947. Gandhi was dejected by the proposal. For India's independence to come with the sacrifice of unity was a monumental blow. Fully twenty years earlier, Gandhi had written prophetically in his autobiography that his South African experiences 'convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu–Muslim unity that my Ahimsa would be put to its severest test'.[184] No one had worked harder or more consistently to avert the situation in which India found herself. Gandhi felt, however, that he could not now oppose the political solution accepted by the leaders of the Congress.[185] On the day Gandhi arrived in Calcutta, one week before independence was to take place under Mountbatten's watch, a mob of more than 300 halted a train, pulled off twelve of its passengers, and killed them in full view of the others. Neither the Congress, the Muslim League, the colonial authorities nor government ministries seemed to have any real control over mob rule. Solely the military retained power, but no one wanted a return to martial law.

Gandhi began his efforts to end the Calcutta riots by doing what no one else had done: he insisted that everyone was in some way responsible for the violence and, therefore, everyone had some control. On 12 August,

183. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 146.
184. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 441.
185. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 505.

Suhrawardy, the Bengal chief minister, returned to Calcutta from Delhi and went directly to see Gandhi. Suhrawardy asked him to remain in Calcutta and work with him. 'If I stay here you will have to stay with me, and live as I live,' Gandhi replied.[186] The two men, together, in another of Gandhi's experiments, moved into an old mansion owned by a Muslim widow in Beliaghata, in one of the most neglected slums of Calcutta. Unprotected by police or military, they would look to the people and reason with them for protection. Their personal needs would be met by Muslim volunteers. The night that Suhrawardy and Gandhi arrived, a menacing crowd hissed and jeered, lunged at Gandhi, and shouted that he was responsible for the killings. 'We are all responsible,' Suhrawardy replied, taking up Gandhi's logic. For two and a half months, the Hindu and the Muslim lived together, slept on the same mats, ate the same food, and toured the streets and alleys of Calcutta. Making themselves utterly accessible, they spoke with whoever approached, offered solace, gave instruction and listened to all grievances. The partners begged and pleaded for the end of revenge so that, as 15 August neared, the independence of both entities from the British should not be marred by bloodshed.[187] On the appointed day, a doubting Calcutta awoke at dawn to tranquillity and an astonishing Hindu–Muslim concord that ushered in independence.

The peace proved to be only temporary; on 31 August, a crowd converged on the Beliaghata mansion carrying a wounded Hindu said to have been injured by a Muslim. Violence once again erupted and, by nightfall, 50 persons had been killed and 300 injured.[188] Gandhi, again, was unafraid to walk into the midst of fighting and fury armed only with nonviolence and Truth. He resorted to a fast, which brought shame and sorrow on the heads of the Muslims and the Hindus, and he called for peace.[189] 'The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting,' Gandhi announced.[190] Again, the national focus was on Gandhi, as in streets and homes all over the country Gandhi's fast became news. On the second day of his fast, peace once more prevailed in Calcutta. Small displays of civic pride began to show with peace parades to Gandhi and Suhrawardy's mansion. Reconciliatory sympathy fasts were undertaken. Hindu 'resistance groups' surrendered their arms to Gandhi. Public broadcasts proclaimed felicity. 'The function of my fast', Gandhi interpreted, 'is not to paralyse us or render us inactive', but 'to release our energies.'[191]

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186. Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy: A Biography* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 65, 66.
187. Ibid., pp. 66, 67.
188. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 154.
189. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 507.
190. Mohandas K. Gandhi in *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 2 September 1947, p. 10; *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 89, 1983, p. 132.

When a prominent delegation of business executives, labor leaders, editors and officers of the Congress Party and the Muslim League joined Suhrawardy to sit beside Gandhi's pallet on 4 September, Gandhi listened to their pleadings that he end his fast. In response, he demanded two promises: that communal violence would not reoccur and, if it did, they would lay down their lives resisting it. Retiring to another room, the delegation deliberated and returned with a signed agreement that they would 'strive unto death' to deter any bloodshed.[192] Gandhi asked for a glass of orange juice and broke his fast.

During the tense period accompanying the partition of India, a time of fragility and dislocation, Hindu–Muslim violence did not return to Calcutta. Until his fast to end the killing, Gandhi's efforts had been aimed directly or indirectly against the British. The Calcutta fast was *satyagraha* leveled at his own people. Just as self-suffering could cut against the rationalized defenses of the British, it could penetrate the complacency of sympathizers and stir them to direct involvement. He wanted to awaken the uninvolved citizenry and kindle their ire about what they themselves were allowing to happen. Gandhi, understanding that fasting was his most formidable tool, said that *satyagrahis* should preferably fast against a 'lover', someone who shares an underlying aim.[193] Again, days before the Calcutta débâcle, he commented, 'Fasting unto death is the last and the most potent weapon in the armoury of satyagraha.'[194] In a sense, it could be seen as the ultimate in resistance.

In Delhi, Gandhi similarly undertook a fast beginning on 13 January 1948, the month of his assassination. He was forlorn about reports of renewed riots and burnings in the Punjab and prepared to leave for the region to exert his personal influence. In so many parts of the subcontinent, it was only Gandhi's presence that seemed to make any difference where civil authority had broken down and military police could not hold sway. A bomb exploded at one of his prayer meetings on 20 January and, so, he may have then believed that his supreme act of self-sacrifice was likely to happen.[195] On entering a prayer meeting in New Delhi on 30 January, he was killed by three shots fired by an orthodox Hindu *brahmin* named Nathuram Vinayak Godse, from Maharashtra, a seat of militant Hindu nationalism, who was editor of *Hindu Rashtra* in Poona, south of Bombay.

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191. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 420, cited in Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., pp. 156, 234 note 80.
192. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 158.
193. Ibid., p. 164.
194. *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 75, 1979, p. 147; cited in Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 163.
195. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., p. 167.

Wrote Shridharani, 'Godse bowed to Gandhi before taking aim. . . . Gandhi fell, as he had always wished, with the name of God on his tongue – *He Rama!*'[196] The person who had done more than anyone else to teach the world how to achieve monumental political change without harm or violence died a violent death. At his trial, Godse claimed that he was not against Gandhi's efforts on behalf of independence and acknowledged that Gandhi had done 'nothing for personal gain'.[197] His explanation was that Gandhi was a great man but a traitor to his religion, also Godse's religion. Gandhi's assiduous efforts to be fair in his dealings with Muslims and Hindus had led him to be more solicitous of Muslims and harsher with Hindus. These acts of 'sublime impartiality', as Shridharani put it, were misinterpreted by Godse, who considered Gandhi to have been responsible for the partition of India. Godse was executed for having killed a man who was opposed to capital punishment. Still, more must be said.

Gandhi's assassination had the effect of bringing India's nightmarish situation to an abrupt end. It was the enormity of his loss that made his assassination, rather than any other factor or event, the force that stopped the Hindu–Muslim violence that attended partition and led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands. His death brought amity in the same way that Gandhi had achieved everything else. This is not to speak of pressure tactics or emotional blackmail – although profound grief, remorse and shame must have been felt by the millions who were stricken by the cruelty of his end and the depth of their loss. Rather, in a more careful reckoning of the impact of Gandhi's death, it can be seen that his self-sacrifice cut through the prepared rational defenses of those who, by their silence, condoned violence; it appealed in a way that words could not for an end to the insanity of religious strife; and it confounded the hate-mongers and purveyors of communal malice. By encumbering himself with suffering far greater than the original grievance, Gandhi's ultimate self-sacrifice truly testified to the power of truth.

The power of truth for all the world

In 1944, Albert Einstein commented, 'It may be that generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever, in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth.'[198]

Gandhi demonstrated the power of *satyagraha* in militant struggles in the following areas:

- Against racism in South Africa.
- Against imperialism and colonial rule in India.

196. Shridharani, *War without Violence,* op. cit., p. 231.
197. Ibid., p. 229.
198. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal,* op. cit., p. 107.

- On behalf of the *harijans,* or untouchables, and against the caste system.[199]
- For political awareness and participation by all people.
- Against economic exploitation and on behalf of the poorest peasants and workers.
- Against internecine strife between the Hindus and Muslims.
- Against sexism and cruelty toward women.
- For nonviolent methods of struggle, or *satyagraha*.

By lifting fear and introducing self-esteem, self-reliance and vigorous ideas about the dignity and rights of all to the Indian people, Gandhi challenged not only the Indians and the British, but also the peoples of the entire world to reconsider their methods for the betterment of all of humanity. Wrote one student of Gandhian thought, S. R. Bakshi:

> This was a new kind of warfare – you look for whatever good there is in your opponent and appeal to it, then when you have conquered him by your capacity to suffer and by your goodwill, you send him out as a master and then call him back as a friend. That is literally a new kind of warfare – it ennobles both the one who uses it and the one upon whom it is used. . . . War with the ordinary weapons degrades both.[200]

Individual freedom and social responsibility were not in conflict for Gandhi. Indeed, the idea that personal commitment is the starting point for bringing about change on a grand scale is one of Gandhi's major contributions. He also transformed the plight of the average Indian by revising the significance of the individual. The making of homespun in a remote crossroads not only clothed the naked, it became part of the process of achieving national sovereignty.[201]

In seeking to bring about radical change through the transformation of public standards, principles, values and ethics, Gandhi brought to bear a profound moral and religious consciousness. Originating in his own Hindu

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199. 'The earlier religious significance of caste has now been wholly subordinated to its political role,' contends one writer. 'Today, the caste vote in India functions in much the same way as the ethnic vote in New York City does.' Amitav Ghosh, 'Caste Loyalties, Democratic Promises', *New York Times*, 7 May 1996, p. A23.
200. Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Non-violence,* op. cit., p. 68.
201. The Indian elections of 1996 reflect Gandhi's legacy in the specific sense of electoral participation. The eleventh national balloting, with more than 800,000 polling places, and high voting and campaign participation among traditionally lower-caste constituencies in more than 500 political parties, is a contribution from Gandhi in raising political awareness. 'Gandhi's lifelong campaign against untouchability brought the most depressed sections of Indian society into political awareness. It was not only the untouchables, but even middle-level castes which were affected; it was a transition from élite politics to mass politics.' B. R. Nanda, letter to the author, New Delhi, 9 May 1996.

spiritualism, it also drew upon the deep truths of Jainism, Islam, the Judeo-Christian tradition and other faiths. Long before there was a state, there was religion. Gandhi's own quest for self-realization and redefinition of power was embedded in his desire 'to see God face to face'. He also understood that, for most people, the verities of life are often rooted in religious longings.

The simplicity of Gandhi's way of life, his appeal to both political and religious sensibilities and his communication with peasants made him the symbol of the Indian masses and Indian nationalism. In blending the political, the socio-economic and the moral, he wanted not only what would make India great but what would make India good.[202]

Like so many of his ideas, Gandhi's concept of the constructive program would also have an impact on movements for social transformation and political change during the twentieth century – and beyond – as can be seen when, in the midst of turbulence, organizations or networks of popular committees, agricultural cooperatives and other systems for survival are built into the planning of movements.

Gandhi demonstrated the revolutionary power of nonviolence. While his *satyagraha* was unique as a method combining social reconstruction with the means of outright political change, there can be no doubt that the experiments in *satyagraha* and *swaraj* that Gandhi orchestrated have had a planetary impact, influencing and molding movements in countries remote from each other and decades apart. Not only did he end the British Raj in India, history may show that he brought about the collapse of British imperialism and, as such systems in general became dispirited and rejected, he may ultimately be credited with bringing about the disintegration of most forms of European colonialism.

India did not – in the way that we have analyzed – throw off the most entrenched and longest-lasting machinery of colonialism solely because of poverty and exploitation, whether absolute or relative, or repression. Anguish and impoverishment may have led to protests, poor wages and working conditions may have produced strikes, subjugation and repression may have generated uprisings, but it was through a complex and decades-long process that the Indian people learned to confront power itself. In radically insisting on nonviolence and Truth, Gandhi redefined the meaning of power.

Just as Gandhi trained the nation of India in the meaning of self-determination by teaching her citizens about the origins and uses of power, he also reinterpreted its meaning for the globe. The enormity and range of Gandhi's experiences and techniques have proved invaluable to countless movements around the world, and elements of the truths that Gandhi discerned have been successfully applied by many struggles in a multitude

202. Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle,* op. cit., pp. 327–8.

of lands and cultures. His prophetic voice echoes down a century whose greatest problem would be that of the color line and ethnic conflict. His theories and procedures for nonviolent action have spread throughout the world, often transformed for cultural and political settings beyond anything Gandhi himself might have imagined; indeed, these methods have already moved beyond Gandhi.[203] Although the sheer scale of the confrontations that Gandhi took upon himself is daunting, many of the issues on which he ventured to experiment are still in contention today. Indeed, the potential use of Gandhian insights for the resolution of problems may be greater than it was earlier in the twentieth century. The idea that individuals are able to shape their lives in accordance with high ideals, no matter how powerless they may think they are, is more widespread than in the past. The notion that personal change and social change are linked is more pervasive. There is a widespread and critical awareness that intolerance must be opposed.

In 1938, Gandhi had written: 'A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.'[204] This is what Gandhi did.

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203. Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist,* op. cit., p. 15.

204. *Harijan*, 19 November 1938.

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Chapter Two

Standing face to face with power: Martin Luther King Jr and the American civil rights movement

Our most powerful nonviolent weapon is . . .
also our most demanding, that is organization.
Martin Luther King Jr

The young Martin

The mass movement that surged through the Southern region of the United States between the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 stands directly in the tradition of nonviolent resistance propounded by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. How the ideas of Gandhi traveled 12,000 miles in the days of lengthy ocean voyages and propeller airplanes, to invigorate an American movement, cannot be understood without an awareness of the long history of interaction between African-Americans and the Gandhian independence movement. As early as the 1920s, black Americans saw that Gandhi had developed a strategy of resistance to oppression that might be applicable in the United States. As the historian Sudarshan Kapur has noted, Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays, Channing Tobias, James Farmer and James Lawson were among the African-American students of Gandhi who had traveled to India before the emergence of Martin Luther King Jr as a civil rights leader.[1] Nevertheless, King was the person primarily responsible for popularizing Gandhian ideas in the United States, and he convinced many black Americans that these ideas could be effective in attacking white racial domination.

Martin Luther King Jr, born on 15 January 1929, practically grew up in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. In and out of the staid brick edifice almost every day of the week, on Sunday, 'The Lord's Day', he was there most of the time. The Sabbath started with Bible stories in Sunday school classes that were attended by him and all his friends, his

1. See Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992).

sister Christine and his brother 'A.D.', named after their grandfather Adam Daniel. Sunday worship brought the week to a climax, with an hour and a half or two hours of singing, preaching and prayer. After the service came fellowship in the church hall and a savory congregational dinner. Weekdays, too, Martin was at church for evening services, midweek prayer meetings, children's clubs and other events. Being the son of the minister meant that his life was entirely organized around the church, located as it was only three blocks from where the family lived on Auburn Avenue. His father, the Reverend Martin Luther King Sr, called 'Daddy King', was known far and wide as an impassioned preacher who was always able to move the packed congregation with sermons delivered with a thunderous emotional edge and intensity of purpose that made him the envy of his contemporaries. Martin's mother, Alberta, who never had an unkind word for anyone, played the Wurlitzer organ, with its 2,000 pipes, during Sunday worship, and was usually seated in full view of her son next to the choir. Her father, the Reverend Adam Daniel Williams, had taken over the pastorate of Ebenezer in 1894 – two years before the United States Supreme Court upheld the laws of segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* – and through his labors formed the church into a congregation of thousands, known across several states.

Occasionally little 'M.L.', as Martin Jr was called as a youngster, was puzzled. His best friends before he was old enough to go to school had been the white shopowner's sons across the street. He never forgot the day he learned that he would have to go to one school, while his pals went to another. A time had come when their parents no longer let their sons play with him because they were white, and he was 'colored'. They made excuses for why the boys could not come out to play.[2] Having pondered these matters, M.L. finally asked his mother to explain. As the educated daughter of a clergyman, protected from the sting of discrimination much as he would himself be sheltered, his mother put him on her lap and told him about slavery. She explained how the practice of human bondage ended with the Civil War, how the separation of the races had been woven into the fabric of American life, and how, in the years since, it had been enshrined in segregation statutes. She told him about separate facilities, divided waiting rooms, sitting in the back of buses, separate drinking fountains, different doctors' offices, segregated restaurants and the balconies of theaters where 'colored' could sit. And then she said the 'words that almost every Negro hears before he can yet understand the injustice that makes them necessary: "You are as good as anyone."'[3]

2. Martin Luther King Jr, *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 19.

The norms and values of the Victorian era were still in place in the South of the 1930s, and corporal punishments were meted out by conscientious parents. The prevailing theory was, as the Bible expressed it, 'he who spares the rod hates his son'. Indifferent parents would let children ramble about unguided, but if you loved your child, you would be strict. Despite the rigors of his father's switching, the lasting memories from M.L.'s childhood were of a happy, secure and joyful home filled with warmth and laughter. The respect felt by the parishioners for his father enlarged his own growing sense of self-esteem. As the years passed and he began to mature, M.L.'s inner development was affected by the powerful witness of his father and mother, week after week and year after year, before him in the chancel leading the congregation in supplication, meditation and hymn. He observed his father ministering to church members in trying times, responding to their sorrows and sharing their joys. His parents' lives were devoted to helping others through the difficulties of life, as they coped with illness and bereavement. As his parishioners moved, sometimes with uneasy steps, along the varied paths of life's distresses, his father walked with them.

Life in a minister's family was life lived in the raw. At any moment, the telephone might interrupt and bring the suffering, pains and losses experienced by church members to the kitchen table. A knock on the door late at night could mean an infant's sudden death, a marriage torn by desertion, hospitalization, an alcoholic's plunge back into the torments of drinking or an attempted suicide. As he grew older and became more discerning, M.L. saw his father help people cope with the degradations of being African-Americans living in a callous white society. It was not only private suffering that intruded on the pastor's family, but rank injustice from institutionalized racial supremacy making itself felt through unemployment, poor jobs, low wages, inadequate housing, bad transportation and segregated accommodations. Daddy King would frequently find himself acting as a character witness for members of the church or negotiating with the white community on their behalf, getting people out of jail or trying to get them into Atlanta's rigidly segregated hospitals. M.L. grew up with an abhorrence of segregation, but he did not then, and would not later, see himself as an iconoclast.

Dwarfing all other influences in M.L.'s life was his father, whose discipline and stern patriarchal rule dominated the home and his childhood. His parents emphasized the importance of showing respect for people by dressing as well as one could. Alberta's family had become squarely middle class, and the preacher's home was emphatically so. M.L. was also sensitized at an early age to the clichés about blacks that held them to be diseased, odorous, lazy, ill-kempt, grinning and shuffling in subservience. As if to contest such stereotypes, even as a boy, he was well-groomed and neatly outfitted. Throughout his life, he sought to overturn and dispel these

preconceptions by the smart way in which he dressed, the *gravitas* of his deportment and the solemnity of his public reserve.[4]

Having been a sharecropper's son, Daddy King knew intimately what it meant for families to try to free themselves from the grips of the tenant-credit system that widely replaced plantation slavery in the South after the Civil War. Being a form of semi-slavery under which tenant farmers worked the land they did not own – usually with a meager house and credit extended against the products of their labors – few could ever work themselves out of debt. Daddy King would tell his children what it was like to be mired in a feudal system and how he had worked from sunrise until sundown:

> The black man had no right . . . that the white man was bound to respect. . . . He wasn't nothin' but a nigger, a workhorse. . . . [White] Man owned the land, he owned the mules, he owned everything. You paid for half of the guano that was used to make the cotton grow, and half of some of the seed. . . . And then you worked just for half, and whatever grew on the farm, they'd rob you out of it. Then you wasn't supposed to question them. You just worked and let them take from you.[5]

Knowing that economic shackles had replaced those of iron, and that people were free on paper but lived out their lives in servitude, Daddy had begun to resist at an early age. After he went into the ministry, he was able to combine his defiance with an old-fashioned piety. His impassioned preaching allowed him not only to build an acclaimed ministry, but also gave him power and presence when he stood up against the defenders of Atlanta's segregation. In 1935, he led several hundred black citizens to the courthouse to register to vote; in 1936, he was spokesperson for black schoolteachers trying to get their salaries adjusted to the level paid to the city's white teachers. Additionally, he sat on boards of directors and was involved in organizations working on social and political issues. The young Martin admired how his father's 'fearless honesty' and 'robust, dynamic presence' demanded attention and got it.[6] In Martin's world, Daddy was king.

Despite the humiliations that awaited in the larger society, most of the institutions that the young Martin encountered were entirely managed

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4. As an adult, in Birmingham, King would briefly dress in blue-denim jeans, and in Mississippi in 1965 he would adopt the denim overalls being worn by younger civil rights workers, both representing departures from the proprieties of his business suit, starched white shirt and polished shoes.
5. Benjamin Mays and Martin Luther King Sr, Interlude, 'The Old Men: Two Who Knew Him Well', in Howell Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), pp. 460, 461.
6. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 19. A proud man of staunch views, Daddy King allowed no one to patronize him. As an adult, King liked to remember how his father had stood up to a white policeman who used the condescending term 'boy' to him. Ibid., p. 20.

by blacks or owned by them. Banks, insurance companies and businesses were capitalized by African-Americans. The proportion of black-owned enterprises on Auburn Avenue was so great that it was known as 'Sweet Auburn Avenue'. A black social élite had developed over the decades in Atlanta, among which the King family had high standing. Among the black civic groups and organizations that were being built to fight segregation, Daddy King held important leadership roles; not only did he exert his individuality, but he frequently challenged the white power brokers and won. Martin's role model, therefore, was a man who possessed respect, power and influence. Martin's understanding of leadership was shaped by the black teachers, bankers, entrepreneurs, managers, church lay leaders and ministers that he knew. Their leadership was independent of the white apparatus of power, but it was not incendiary. White people figured rarely and insignificantly in the important aspects of life.

Precocious as a child, Martin skipped several grades in school and bounded ahead of his classmates. By age 13, in 1942, he had entered Booker T. Washington High School, the only black high school in the city of Atlanta, a full year ahead of the other young people his age. In the eleventh grade, he won an oratorical contest in a Georgia town some distance from Atlanta for his delivery of a speech, 'The Negro and the Constitution'. On returning with his teacher by bus, they were forced by the bus driver to give up their seats when white passengers boarded, so that the two of them were jostled as they stood in the aisle for the trip. It was the angriest moment of his life.[7]

One topic was rarely far from the teenager's mind. His father wanted M.L. to succeed him as a minister and, specifically, to follow him at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Just as it was natural for his father to cherish this ideal, it was equally normal for the youthful M.L. to rebel against it, and resist it he did. At the same time that he could witness his father's involvement in the community, he could also see that ministers usually did not lead but, rather, followed their congregations' pace. More often than not, they had been tamed into accepting the yokes of segregation and second-class citizenship. A Negro minister could be powerful, M.L. could see that, but why did so many simply accept the status quo instead of pressing for change? The passionate if rambling homilies of his father sometimes embarrassed him, and the adulation enjoyed by his father must have disheartened him as he thought of making his own way.

As the Second World War siphoned off college students to fight in the European and Asian theaters, Morehouse College in Atlanta, founded by white Baptists for freed slaves after the Civil War, began to admit high

7. Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 16.

school juniors with superior academic records, one year early. Morehouse stood out among the segregated colleges of the South for its comparatively unconstrained thought and sense of social responsibility. In 1944, as he neared the end of the eleventh grade, M.L. prepared to enter Morehouse that autumn at the age of 15, two or three years ahead of the usual age. Although he was then determined not to be a member of the clergy, the church community had awakened in M.L. a call to service – as it often does for ministers' children, who frequently pursue gratification from benefiting others. Lured by the thought that he might be able to make a difference in people's lives, he yearned to address the prejudice in which so many African-Americans found themselves immured. He actively considered medicine and the law as professions, yet finally decided to study sociology with English literature as his minor field. He was soon shocked to find that his segregated public high school had left him without adequate skills in reading and, particularly since he was younger than his peers, he had to work hard to remedy this deficiency.

It was not long before he encountered Dr Benjamin E. Mays, the scholarly president of Morehouse, with his commanding courtly presence and international outlook. 'I am not interested in producing lawyers or doctors but want to produce *men*,' Mays would say, making a lasting impression on Martin. From time to time, Mays offered to the student body erudite presentations on various topics, including castigations of racial exclusion and the role of the white churches of America in protecting it. He also chided black ministers for their lack of training, pie-in-the-sky sermons and failure to discuss social justice. 'Thy kingdom come', for Mays, emphasized 'on earth as it is in heaven'. As time went by, Mays's chapel remarks made Martin think that the ministry could, after all, be a place for intellectual engagement and a potent means with which to confront racial superiority and its terrible manifestations. The ministry did not have to be all pulpit-pounding exhortation or fire and brimstone. At 17 years of age, M.L. decided that the Baptist ministry was, after all, the place for him. Three years after entering Morehouse, in 1947, Martin offered a trial sermon at his father's instigation at Ebenezer. His preaching exceeded his father's ambitions, and he was shortly thereafter ordained. Because he was still living at home and traveling across town for his college courses, he became assistant pastor at Ebenezer. Not surprisingly, he often preached about the redemptive power of Love, the central imperative in Christianity – expressed as 'God is Love', in much the way Gandhi saw God as Truth. When Martin would drop by Mays's office after class, the president would find himself intrigued by the inquisitive maturity of the student, young for his age but with a serious air usually reserved for someone seasoned. In later years, Mays would call him a prophet.

First encounters with Gandhi and Thoreau

It was through Mays that Martin Luther King Jr probably first encountered Gandhi's philosophies. The educator had traveled to India, at the end of 1936, and returned with a message of portent. He often mentioned the Indian independence struggle during his campus-wide Tuesday-morning lectures.

In addition to the seeds cast by Mays, M.L. received an assignment to read *On Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau. King later recalled his first encounter with Thoreau and said that he was 'fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system'; he found himself so deeply moved that he re-read the work several times, his 'first intellectual contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance'.[8] Particularly intriguing for King was Thoreau's argument that a minority, even a minority of 'one honest man', could inspire a moral revolution.

As a college student, however, King was not much interested in activism or organizing; he neither organized committees nor joined campus crusades. He chose, rather, to pursue the potential offered by the ministry for addressing moral questions. Gandhi and Thoreau may have stimulated him intellectually, but they did not spur him to action. King stayed close to his books.

A Northern organization called the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had come into being in 1942 to fight the so-called Jim Crow laws of segregation. It was an offshoot of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), a peace organization that had resulted from an ecumenical conference in Constance, Switzerland, in 1914 and whose first chapter was established at Cambridge University in the same year.[9] The US branch, called the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and based in Nyack, New York, had come into being in 1915. CORE consciously and specifically sought to employ techniques used by Gandhi and had conducted sit-ins as early as 1942. In 1947, for example, when King was a student, it was arranging 'stand-ins' at a Chicago roller-skating rink that excluded black skaters, despite its location in a black area. That same year, CORE organized a 'freedom ride' called the Journey of Reconciliation, to protest segregation.[10]

Three days after Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948, President Harry S. Truman sent a message to the Congress asking for a federal anti-lynching law. Regarded as a meager political token at Morehouse,

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8. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 91.
9. Richard Deats, 'Fellowship of Reconciliation, International', in Roger S. Powers, William B. Vogele, Christopher Kruegler and Ronald M. McCarthy (eds.), *Protest, Power and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage,* pp. 178–80 (New York/London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997).
10. James Farmer, Prelude, 'On Cracking White City', in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., pp. 28, 34.

it nonetheless represented a reverberation from Gandhi's death. Later that year, the 19-year-old Martin graduated from Morehouse with a bachelor's degree in sociology and decided to study for the bachelor of arts degree in divinity at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Intellectual pilgrimage to nonviolence

Eager to be independent, impatient to pursue his intellectual and religious adventure and already ordained, King soon found himself at the small, mostly white, private nondenominational seminary that rested on a hilltop, looking down on an industrial city. The student body numbered only a hundred. King was part of a strong presence of black students and was surprised to find that the seminary's liberal administration had taken great pains to include women and Asians, Indians and other foreign students. He studied the New Testament, the Old Testament, ethics, social philosophy, the philosophy of religion and biblical criticism while distinguishing himself as a serious and able student. King was particularly struck by the writings and thinking of one theologian, Walter Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch was among the first leaders of the school of thought that accentuated the need for Christians to act for the equitable reconstruction of society, which came to be known as the Social Gospel. Rauschenbusch set aside metaphysical concerns and addressed himself to the social ethics of Christianity. He believed that the Industrial Revolution, and the era of capitalist expansion it had ushered in, advanced exploitation, perversion and selfishness. Enthralled by Rauschenbusch and his *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, during the first of his three years at Crozer King made the study of Rauschenbusch's thinking the center of his intellectual search for ways to eliminate social injustice. At last he had found the theological basis that he had been seeking for his outlook on social ills. Although he felt that Rauschenbusch put too much emphasis on criticizing the economic system of capitalism, and conversely had come dangerously close to advocating a program in socialism, King found it reinforcing that Rauschenbusch called for the gospel to address the entire human being – body and soul. To be concerned only about the soul and not about the scars left by social and economic tribulation manifested spiritual deterioration, he thought. Rauschenbusch showed King a road he could follow that would lead him away from his father's emphasis on personal salvation and into the arena of social justice as the embodiment of God's love. He did not, however, need to reject entirely his father's pietistic admonitions; rather, he could move beyond them and build on them.

During his Christmas break in 1949, King pored over *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx. He found Marxism objectionable on three grounds: its secular interpretation of history, its ethical relativism and its political totalitarianism. Long before he had been able to absorb the systems of Mahatma Gandhi, he abhorred what he saw as communism's willingness to separate the means from the ends. 'Constructive ends', he

noted, 'can never give absolute moral justification to destructive means, because in the final analysis the end is preexistent in the mean.' If human beings are the children of God, then their welfare is the purpose of the state, and not the other way around. Yet, he found certain dimensions of Marxism stimulating, particularly its critique of the gap between extreme wealth and poverty and its concern for social justice. He was attracted by its emphasis on a classless society even though he acknowledged that it had newly created classes of its own and different forms of injustice. He concluded that Marxism and capitalism each represented but a 'partial truth'.[11] He was concerned that communism may have advanced itself because Christianity had not been sufficiently Christian, and it was partially this conclusion that led him to remain indifferent to Marxist thought all his life.

King devoured both the classical and contemporary social thinkers and philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Bentham, Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke and Mill. He traveled to Philadelphia for a special class in philosophy. Guest lecturers came frequently to Crozer, and he was thus able to hear A. J. Muste, the executive secretary of FOR. Muste was perhaps the foremost radical Christian pacifist of the century. King was dubious, however, about Muste's position that all wars must be resisted. He began studying Nietzsche, who railed at Christianity with its patience and love, scoffing at it as merely a slave mentality. King was caught between one man's repugnance for war and another man's repugnance for love.

One Sunday afternoon in Philadelphia, King heard a sermon delivered by the president of Howard University, Dr Mordecai Wyatt Johnson. To the keen interest of the young seminarian, Johnson preached about the life and thinking of Mahatma Gandhi. The message was 'so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and went out and bought half a dozen books on Gandhi's life and works'.[12] Johnson encouraged young African-Americans to study Gandhi because of the kinship he saw between the situation in the United States for blacks and the struggle of the Indian people against the British. As early as 1930, Johnson had proposed that Gandhi's theories and techniques, and not communism, deserved 'the Negro's most careful consideration'.[13] Although King had heard much the same message from Mays at Morehouse, he had not actually studied Gandhi. Once he started to read Gandhi, in 1950 and 1951, he was particularly fascinated by the 1930 Salt March and Gandhi's use of fasting. The Salt *satyagraha* positively conveyed the right of the Indians to their own resources and the fruits of their labor, and fasting had exceptional potential for touching hearts. The more he read Gandhi, the less he doubted the validity

11. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 92–5.
12. Ibid., p. 96.
13. Quoted in George Schuyler, 'Views and Reviews', *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 March 1930, p. 10, cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 86, 187 note 24.

of a philosophy based on Love: 'As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform.'[14]

Prior to reading Gandhi, King had been inclined to think of the ethics of Jesus as effective only in individual relationships and had begun to feel that other methods might be necessary for racial conflict or discord between nations. In contemplating Gandhi, however, he found that he had been mistaken:

> Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months.
>
> The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, the revolutionary methods of Marx and Lenin, the social-contract theory of Hobbes, the 'back to nature' optimism of Rousseau, and the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.[15]

Mentally awakened and aroused by Gandhi as encountered in Johnson's sermons and in the books he read, King began what he called 'an intellectual odyssey to non-violence'.[16]

Gandhi was compelling and provocative to King in a practical sense, but he was still not shaken to the depths of his being by Gandhi. What held him back from an emotional connection was that Gandhian concepts seemed akin to spiritual principles, religious beliefs or sacred doctrines. By then well into his studies and preparation for the Baptist ministry, King's convictions were firmly set. He was not searching for religious succor. A friend, J. Pius Barbour, recalled that the young seminarian had argued on behalf of Gandhian methods at Crozer, yet his contentions were based on arithmetic – the disadvantages of any minority's adopting a policy of violence – rather than principle.[17] An invigorating all-encompassing passion for a purely nonviolent approach to social and political change, which so many

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14 King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 96.

15. Ibid., p. 97.

16. Ibid.

17 J. Pius Barbour, 'Meditations on Rev. M. L. King, Jr., of Montgomery, Ala.', *National Baptist Voice*, March 1956, cited in Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell and Peter Holloran (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 17.

associate with the life of King, still had to wait a few years, until after the success of the Montgomery bus boycott. At a later period in King's life, Gandhi and an absolute commitment to nonviolent struggle would win his spiritual support and wholehearted conviction.

During his last year at Crozer, King remained caught up in the liberalism of seminary life and its endless opportunities for exploration of the great issues that had been deliberated through the ages. He continued his intellectual odyssey to nonviolence through his study of one of the towering figures of the twentieth century, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, yet not in exactly the way one might imagine. Niebuhr in his 1932 *Moral Man and Immoral Society* had seen no moral difference between violent and nonviolent resistance. He considered them variations in degree rather than in kind, and later claimed that nonviolent resistance was irresponsible because it was unclear that it could be successful in preventing totalitarian despotism. The thinker of German background, who preferred to be called an ethicist rather than a theologian, taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. A pacifist earlier in the century, he had at one time chaired FOR.

During the 1930s, and particularly as the horrors of Nazism in his ancestral country increasingly showed themselves, Niebuhr rejected pacifism. The complexity of human beings makes them capable of colossal collective evil, he contended, quarreling with pacifists who thought it better to refuse to participate in evil or wars. He also contested what he considered to be the romantic views of those who thought human nature to be fundamentally benign. Often considered to be the ultimate realist, Niebuhr argued against liberal ideas of the perfectibility of the human race – concepts that had dominated the mainstream of Protestant thinking prior to Hitler. The notion that human beings are essentially good, and formed in the image of God, had seemed plausible enough for those theologically opposed to a traditional perspective on original sin with its belief that all humans are intrinsically evil and born to sin. Nazism, however, shattered the argument that human beings were slowly, perhaps imperceptibly, improving themselves and their condition.

While Niebuhr brought King to reckon with the question of evil in the world, Gandhi provided him with an answer to Niebuhr's criticism, because he did not believe in acquiescing to evil. Gandhi was committed to opposing evil. Furthermore, he possessed a real weapon – the armament of nonviolent resistance – although it was not based on war *matériel*. King could use Niebuhr's realism on the presence of evil and the necessity to fight it as a guard to prevent himself from falling into the trap of spurious optimism that had characterized much of Protestant liberalism before the Second World War. He could employ it to shield himself from the illusions of a fraudulent hopefulness and to remain wary of the deceptions of idealism. Perhaps this is why King so often quoted Niebuhr. At the same time, he

was able to keep his distance from the shortcomings he found in Niebuhr's thinking – a misperception of the inaccurately termed 'passive resistance' as an expression of naïve faith in the power of Love. This was a distortion of Gandhi's convictions, King believed, because Gandhi's was a militant resistance to evil, carried out 'with as much vigor and power as the violent resister, but . . . with love instead of hate'. From Gandhi, he learned how to combat Niebuhr's evil while not making things worse. King sized up Gandhi's position: 'It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe.'[18]

Distinguishing himself in homiletics, or the art of preaching, King took nine separate courses related to the sound delivery of well-prepared sermons. His fellow students flocked to hear him when he was chosen to offer the student sermon at Thursday chapel.[19] King brought to the practice of preaching his deep roots in an historic church. Slaves who converted to Christianity or were raised in the black churches of the South, despite their status outside the chapel doors, knew something of glory. Forged in the fires of Southern slavery, the African-American church had been the main source of sustenance and deliverance for blacks stretching back into the nineteenth, eighteenth and seventeenth centuries and was the one institution that was never controlled by white people. True, its scriptural origin was the gospel (literally, 'good news') of Jesus Christ, and its imperative lay in the universalism of the worldwide communion of Christianity. Yet, in North America, the black church's provenance, local theologies and governance – whether in a neighborhood or on a national scale – were black.

During slavery, when one's child or loved one could be sold, any bodily violation or harm was permissible by the slave owner, rights and entitlements had no application and not even your name belonged to you, the chapel and the singing of spirituals were yours. Slave exhorters preached under trees. Memorized biblical verses substituted for the education that was prohibited by law. A body of sacred music developed, one of the world's richest repertoires of spiritual expression, which is still sought after worldwide to give voice to life's moments of transcendent joy or to sound a lament. Hymns and spirituals were not solely a means of uplift. Some had double meanings and – even while sung under a watchful slave overseer – might signal a rebellion or let those across a pasture know that a group was preparing to escape by the Underground Railroad.

The theology that was shaped under slavery stressed God's beneficence

18. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 98.
19. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), pp. 75, 76.

toward all people, and the equality of all persons under a loving God. 'You are a child of God,' the preachers emphasized. Spirituals echoed that all are God's children, and 'All God's children got shoes; gonna walk all over God's heaven.' Providential equality was an underlying theme. God's grace had nothing to do with the color of one's complexion. In the three-centuries-old collective experience of faith that all are made in God's image, and with strong biblical mandates for the overthrowing of injustice, there evolved a vocabulary that formed the basis for the modern quest for freedom. A tradition of popular civil resistance was fostered without any artificial separation of politics from religion. One's politics are shaped by one's religion far more than one's faith is affected by politics. The tradition of black, Southern grass-roots protest and resistance – starting with the leaders of slave uprisings and rebellions, moving on to untold numbers of slave preachers, and up through the many local figures whose actions taken together would comprise the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement – started in the church. And it stayed there in one way or another as long as there was something called a civil rights movement. The black communion of faith nurtured a magnanimity of spirit and warmth of humanity that enabled its members to avoid the bigotry and hatred against which they struggled and by which they were held down.

This mingling of resistance and faith was the tradition that had nourished King's grandfather and father, and then fed him. When he stood up in homiletics class at Crozer, King brought with him the collective vocabulary of the black church and a legacy of fortitude that had been centuries in the making. Daddy King's sermons may have been high-strung and fundamentalist, but long before Martin's professors taught him how to structure a proper sermon at Crozer, Daddy had taught his son how to touch the congregation, how to bring the Holy Spirit into their aching hearts, how to make the gospel come to life and how to ask God to shower blessings on his faithful. Small wonder that King got the highest grades. It was also this lexicon and the collective tradition that he embodied that would within a few years project King symbolically to the helm of a people's struggle for freedom (with international repercussions), where he would be able to touch and move persons in all classes and walks of life.

In 1951, King was chosen valedictorian of his class and received the bachelor of divinity degree from Crozer. He was awarded a scholarship of $1,200 for use in graduate school; it was the major prize given annually by the seminary.[20] King decided to go to the School of Theology at Boston University, where he wanted to work toward a Ph.D. in systematic theology.

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20. David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1986), p. 44.

Nonviolent resistance is not for cowards

King's intellectual pilgrimage to nonviolence continued under the guidance of Dr L. Harold DeWolf, his new adviser in Boston. He undertook a demanding load of courses in Christian ethics, the history of philosophy, the New Testament and systematic theology. He studied comparative religion, which included Hinduism and Jainism as well as Islam, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism and other major faiths. Additional courses at Harvard added to his adventures of the mind.

King's study of Niebuhr, on whom he dwelled throughout his graduate study in Boston, led him to question whether Niebuhr had not placed too much stress on corruption and evil; might not his revolt against romantic liberalism have gone so far that Niebuhr, obsessed with recognizing the plague of sin, was unable to reckon with God's grace? When King read Hegel, he was able to apply the philosopher's concept of a dialectical process to his own appreciation that growth came through struggle and pain. Hegel's notion that 'truth is the whole' lifted from King's shoulders the necessity of resolving all abiding conflicts and introduced him to the idea of a synthesis. His study of Hegel, thus, further helped him overcome the dilemma between the position of the radical Christian pacifists and the neo-orthodoxy of Niebuhr. King concluded that the answer was a Hegelian synthesis of both. Human beings are creatures in which both good and evil are at war. The nonviolent protagonist, King decided in perfect step with Gandhi, must reach for the side that favors justice and fairness, with the creative possibilities for brotherhood offered by God's love. When King read *The Power of Nonviolence*, written by Richard Gregg in 1935, he became even more critical of Niebuhr for his sweeping reductions of nonviolence as nonresistance. King's repudiation of Niebuhr's misperception of nonviolence as a form of submission made him even more eager to find a route in which both the ethical and the practical were in harmony.[21]

King ended his formal coursework for the doctoral degree in 1954, having interwoven sundry influences. Nonviolent resistance was now enmeshed in his thinking, which he described in speaking of his philosophy:

> One of the main tenets of this philosophy was the conviction that nonviolent resistance was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their quest for social justice. At this time, however, I had merely an intellectual understanding and appreciation of the position, with no firm determination to organize it in a socially effective situation.[22]

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21. Gandhi had spoken definitively to the misperception of nonviolence as nonresistance, in India in 1936, when he met with American black leaders. He described nonviolence as 'the greatest and the activest force in the world', and declared 'one cannot be passively nonviolent'. Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'With Our Negro Guests', interview with an American black delegation by Mahadev Desai, 21 February 1936. See Chapter Four in this book, 'Gandhi and the African-Americans'.
22. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 101.

As King saw nonviolent struggle at the time, it was comprised of five elements. First, 'Nonviolent resistance is not a method for cowards. . . . It is the way of the strong . . . [and] is not a method of stagnant passivity.' Second, it does not seek the humiliation or defeat of the opponent but, rather, understanding and the awakening of a sense of morality. Third, it is aimed at the evil that one is trying to expunge, not at the persons involved. Fourth, the willingness to suffer any consequences is transformational. Fifth, the resister refuses to use violence but also rejects inward violence of the spirit and hate, choosing instead to reach for Love:

> Love in this connection means understanding, redemptive good will. . . . When we speak of loving those who oppose us . . . we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means understanding, redeeming good will for all men. It is an overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative. It is not set in motion by any quality or function of its object. It is the love of God operating in the human heart.[23]

By Love, King did not mean romantic, affectionate or sentimental passion. The essence of Christianity is Love: 'Christianity needs only *one* word: Love. . . . The movement of Power towards the world is love, while that of the world towards God is reciprocal love; there is no other word available.'[24] The key to King's intention is the sense of active Love given to human beings as grace, reciprocal, reconciliatory, the essence of God, and with no limitation of any kind.

In Boston in February 1952, King met Coretta Scott from Marion, Alabama, who was studying classical music and voice on a scholarship at the New England Conservatory of Music, having previously attended Antioch College in Ohio. He was taken with her poise, character, charm, intelligence and beauty, and decided almost immediately that he wanted to marry her. Her music career, however, would have to be abandoned if they wed, because he made it clear that he wanted her to manage their home. She, on the other hand, was loath to marry a minister; the work of a minister's wife is never done. On 18 June 1953, with these issues resolved, the couple was married by Daddy King on the lawn of her parents' home, near Selma.[25] Returning to Boston, they resumed their respective studies and, in one more month, King was engrossed in writing his dissertation, and was spending much of his time at the Boston University library when he was not at home.

By the time King reached seminary, the movements for social change and crusades against injustices of the dustbowl years in the 1930s and the

23. Ibid., p. 104.
24. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, trans. by J. E. Turner (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1938), p. 646.
25. Branch, *Parting the Waters*, op. cit., p. 101.

Great Depression had all but subsided. An era of dogmatic conservatism associated with cold war anti-communism had set in by the time he got to Boston. Organizations on the political left that had worked to challenge the status quo and overcome the distortions of economic maldistribution and inequity in the 1930s would soon be overwhelmed and exhausted by the noxious fumes of 1950s McCarthyism. In the name of fighting communist penetration, Senator Joseph McCarthy had launched a vulgar campaign of unsubstantiated attacks on many distinguished Americans, including Protestant clergy, it was not until he moved against army officers and civilian officials with his allegations that congressional hearings in 1954 discredited him. King's disinclination to become involved in protest meshed with the quietude of the American political landscape during the years of McCarthy's scare tactics. His detachment was consistent with the era. King at this time bore a striking resemblance to the subject of his doctoral thesis, Paul Tillich, who was interested in ideas and disdained political action.

King chose to write his thesis on the theological contrast between Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman's views on the nature of God. Tillich was a German theologian who, like Niebuhr, taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and whose principal work was in the field of systematic theology and was considered a major statement on the meaning of the Christian faith. Heeding concepts, but taking little notice of political activity, Tillich thought of himself as a 'boundary man', standing between old ideas and new, who could help heal ruptures. He was concerned with God's omnipotence. To Tillich, God was transcendent. He spoke of God as 'being-itself' or the 'ground of being'. King wrote of Tillich's conception: 'God is the power of being in everything and above everything.'[26] For Wieman, a pluralist, God was involved in all things. In 1935 the two theologians had fallen into disagreement, and King adopted this moment of divergence as his starting point. Once again, he found that neither had the complete answer, that he agreed with each partially, and he sought to synthesize their positions, much as he had done with Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr, Muste and others.

In his dissertation, King touched on some of the themes that he would later reiterate in his preaching and writing. He wrote that 'justice is dependent on love . . . and is really an act of love protesting against that

26. Martin Luther King Jr, 'A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman' (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University School of Theology, 1955) (Ph.D. dissertation), in Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell and Louis R. Harlan (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Vol. 1: *Called to Serve, January 1929–June 1951* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 405.

which violates love'.[27] Although it would later be discerned that he had plagiarized portions of his thesis, belief in the fusion of the redemptive power of Love with the transforming force of justice would remain constant throughout his life.

Torn between a number of choices open to him, King debated whether to accept a teaching position or a pastorate. Dr Mays urged him to return to Morehouse. Dr DeWolf thought him a 'scholar's scholar' and suggested academia. Yet King recalled that most of the figures who had been subjects of his study at seminary and graduate school – Mays, DeWolf, Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr and Tillich – had served parishes before turning to teaching. He thought this too might be best for him.[28]

A number of churches sought him. The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, invited him to offer a trial sermon. In January 1954 he traveled to Montgomery where the parishioners showed him around the red-brick church and bell tower, built during Reconstruction after the Civil War. Reconstruction was a period of grand pledges and expectations for former slaves, a time soon ended by trickery, terror, repression and a reactionary compromise in 1876, and followed by the imposition of segregation. The communicants pointed out that the church was located across the street from the state capitol and ringed by government buildings. King chose for his sermon the text of Revelation 21:16, and preached 'The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life':

> Love yourself, if that means healthy self-respect. That is the length of life. Love your neighbor as yourself; you are commanded to do that. That is the breadth of life. But never forget that there is an even greater commandment, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' This is the height of life.[29]

On 14 April 1954, King accepted the offer of the Dexter Avenue congregation on the condition that the church would furnish the parsonage and allow him time and expenses so that he could complete his dissertation. When Daddy King heard of this decision, he was filled with consternation that his son, the associate pastor at Ebenezer, had accepted an offer somewhere else. King, still wanting independence, started his sojourn as Dexter's pastor in May.

On 17 May 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down *Brown v. Board of Education*, the first of its five landmark decisions ruling segregation of public schools to be unconstitutional. After the Civil War

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27. Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell and Peter Holloran (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Vol. 2: *Rediscovering Precious Values, July 1951–November 1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 442.
28. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, op. cit., p. 47.
29. Ibid., p. 48.

and Reconstruction, the laws of segregation passed in the South were based on the doctrine of 'separate but equal'. A euphemism if ever there was one, black people theoretically had the same institutions as whites but they were to be separate, to keep the races apart. The result was second- and third-rate schools and hospitals for black people dotted across the Southern states, many of appallingly poor quality wherever they could be found. In many parts of the South, there were no high schools for black teenagers.

The court overturned an earlier high court's decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson* – the 1896 decision upholding the constitutionality of 'separate but equal' seating on trains – destroying the segregationist doctrine that had prevailed for fifty-eight years. The legal apparatus of deceit was smashed. Struck down was a skein of laws – the justification of inferiority – that had held back and ensnared those with more melanin than others. Some Southern blacks regarded it as the second Emancipation Proclamation. The white reaction, however, was swift, severe and vicious. Southern white opposition to the ruling erupted across the region. State-condoned organizations of terror, such as the Ku Klux Klan, flamed wooden crosses in Florida and Texas. These white-hooded nightriders and vigilantes, masquerading under the cover of secret membership, struck fear in the hearts of black people, and whites who deviated from the stern bans of segregation.

It was at this moment that the King family moved to Montgomery, Coretta reluctantly returning to her native Alabama. The parsonage was on an oak-shaded street in what was called the Negro section of the city. It had seven rooms and a veranda with rails. In September 1954, as some black children began going to white schools in Montgomery, Martin Luther King Jr was officially installed as the minister of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

The Montgomery struggle sparks a movement

Resistance to slavery had started on the slave ships, and almost 300 years of enslavement for the Africans brought to America in chains had produced countless revolts. Over the dark decades of bondage, rebellion was manifest in refusal to take slave names, through uprisings and escapes. Some slaves rejected baptism because the Christian church condoned slavery. During the first half of the twentieth century, the cumulative effect of African-American protests began to build, moving toward the point of explosion. It was not, however, until the bus boycott that began on Thursday, 1 December 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, that a critical mass was reached and the capacity for unified and coordinated confrontation developed. At that moment, the canon of racist laws would be challenged in such a way that a movement would begin in a former capital of the Confederacy, at one time the headquarters for the slave states that seceded from the Union, and the boundaries for a decade of nonviolent struggle would be established. It was not, however, the first collective resistance against the system of American

apartheid. It was not even the first bus boycott. Cities such as Baton Rouge in Louisiana, Mobile in Alabama and Atlanta in Georgia had already capitulated to black mobilizations and agreed to first-come, first-served seating on city buses; in Baton Rouge, it had taken only seven days to win.[30] What distinguished Montgomery's particular struggle was the remarkable cohesion and unity of an entire city's black population in prolonged and well-executed civil resistance against intransigent city authorities.

In the beginning, those whose labors brought about the Montgomery protest were lay persons rather than clergy, and they were working principally outside the church. Yet once the struggle was actually sparked, in a matter of days the center of action and the vortex of leadership dramatically shifted to the churches. The shoulders onto which the burdens of leadership fell were those of the new pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

On 1 December, a tailor's assistant in Montgomery named Rosa Parks refused to stand all the way home on the Cleveland Avenue bus, as she had been ordered to do by the driver, J. F. Blake, in order to free a seat for a white male passenger. The black users of the Alabama capital's public transportation system, about 70 percent of its riders, were customarily required to pay at the front of the bus and then step back out into the street and reboard through the rear door. Even if the first four rows reserved for 'whites only' were empty, and the section for African-Americans were filled, blacks still had to remain standing. Parks's refusal to stand, as ordered in keeping with the laws, was unusual, but it was not, as many suppose, spontaneous. In the summer of 1955, Parks had attended Highlander Folk School, now Highlander Folk Center, a training institute for labor union organizers in Monteagle, Tennessee, which for more than twenty years had provided a unique forum for interracial dialogue in the rigidly segregated South. Founded in 1932 by Myles Horton and run by him for years, segregationists routinely branded Highlander a communist training school, even though the rabidly anti-communist Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) dismissed the allegation.[31]

For years, E. D. Nixon, a leader in the Montgomery black community, had been searching for a test case that could be used to make a legal challenge to segregation in the courts. Nixon was the former branch president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who had, in the late 1930s, started the Montgomery local branch of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters – one of the key labor organizations for advancing the rights of African-Americans, since most

30. Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), p. 12.

31. David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From 'Solo' to Memphis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1981), pp. 24, 25, 234 note 10.

sleeping-car porters on the railroads were black. He was also an advocate of voter registration through the Montgomery chapter of the Alabama Progressive Democratic Association, which he led.

As a participant in the tiny number of interracial and socially progressive organizations in Alabama, including the Council on Human Relations, he met with the few whites who publicly opposed the more grotesque aspects of the state's system of segregation. These included Clifford and Virginia Foster Durr, a couple with strong links to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration in Washington, who had a wide network of friends in the capital city. Clifford Durr, an attorney – later appointed to the Federal Communications Commission by President Roosevelt – actively assisted the small group of black lawyers in town. Nixon would bring to Durr cases of African-Americans who had been beaten in jail or defaulted on loans when they had been charged 500 percent interest.[32] Had Nixon not been shopping for a legal challenge, the action of the seamstress might have gone unnoticed, as had so many other sacrifices and protests in the past.

The potential held by Parks's peerless character had been observed by Virginia Durr, for whom Parks sewed as a dressmaker. Durr had been active during the 1940s in the fight against lynching and the poll tax. Lynching was a form of vigilante terror in which private citizens, outside the judicial system, tortured and hanged their hapless victims, who were not only alleged rapists but also thieves, swindlers or anyone else who offended them. Lynchings were often done in the South to create an atmosphere of fear among the descendants of slaves. The poll tax, by which a fee, such as $6, might be charged for the privilege of registering to vote, was employed to create economic barriers to the ballot for blacks and poor whites, who might have earned 50 cents for a day's labor during the Great Depression or a dollar a day at other times, and for whom $6 represented an exorbitant fee; even after the Second World War, $6 would have been an inordinate sum for them.

Virginia Durr came from a planter family in the Black Belt – named for areas with black populations of 50 percent or more – whose Union Springs plantation once comprised 35,000 acres. Reared with romantic nostalgia for a benevolent slave system, she might have been expected to be a bulwark of white supremacy. Yet, long before a coherent civil rights movement existed, she worked in Alabama to get rid of despicable racial practices and laws.[33]

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32. Virginia Foster Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986), p. 243.

33. In the 1950s, both Clifford and Virginia Durr were victimized by the witch hunts of McCarthyism, at the congressional level as well as locally, and were attacked as communists and threats to national security.

When Myles Horton wrote to Virginia Durr in the spring of 1955 asking if she would recommend someone from Montgomery for a two-week scholarship at Highlander Folk School for a summer school-desegregation workshop, she immediately thought about Rosa Parks because of the work Parks was doing with the black schoolchildren who were integrating public schools in Montgomery. She was tutoring them, helping them prepare their clothes and shoes and making sure they had proper books. She was also active in the NAACP. As Durr recalled, Parks made $23 a week sewing at a department store downtown. Parks and her husband, who was a barber, lived with her mother, who kept house for the couple. When Horton phoned to confirm that Parks could have the scholarship, Durr rushed to see her. Parks demurred; she did not have money for the bus fare to go to Tennessee. Durr persisted; she raised the $12 for the round-trip fare from a white Montgomery businessman, Aubrey Williams.[34]

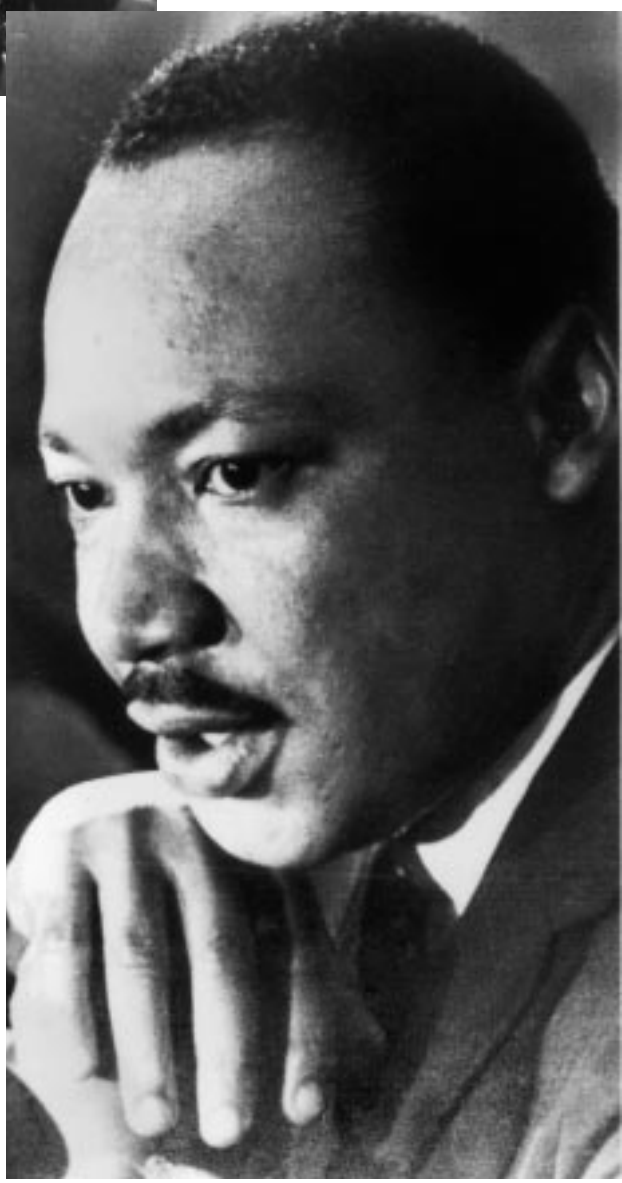
At Highlander, Parks learned the theories and techniques for nonviolent direct action from the full-time professional organizers at the school and found herself for the first time in contact with a group of enlightened Southern whites who wanted to end segregation. Boycotts were among the methods of economic noncooperation covered. Groups involved would stop buying or patronizing a provider of goods or services in a coordinated act of withholding economic patronage, if persuasion or negotiations failed to attain a goal. A woman with a sweet personality, genuinely kind, soft-spoken and of thoughtful reserve, in addition to her training, Parks also had an independent mind and a strong sense of personal security. Parks recalled:

> I had problems with bus drivers over the years, because I didn't see fit to pay my money into the front and then go around to the back. Sometimes bus drivers wouldn't permit me to get on the bus, and I had been evicted from the bus. . . . There had been incidents over the years.[35]

Hers was a deliberate act of political cognizance. Although she may have had tired feet, her act of defiance had nothing to do with being physically taxed. Having worked all day at the department store, she was looking for a bus that had some empty seats and, after waiting, finally entered one with a vacancy in the row just behind the section reserved for whites, the other three seats already having been taken by blacks. Meanwhile, the rear of the bus filled with blacks standing in the aisle. On the third stop, more people boarded and all the front seats were taken, leaving one white man standing

34. Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle*, op. cit., p. 278. Williams was president of the Southern Conference Education Fund, a group that worked to change white attitudes toward racial discrimination.

35. Rosa L. Parks, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., p. 40.



The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr addresses a mass meeting at the Mt Zion A.M.E. Zion Church – in Montgomery, Alabama, on 29 January 1957 – approximately one month after the end of the 381-day bus boycott.
(Photo: Courtesy of Jay: Leviton-Atlanta, and the Martin Luther King Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

Despite his initial reluctance and at only 26 years of age, King's leadership of the Montgomery bus boycott made him the leading symbolic personage for the mass nonviolent struggle that would change the United States.

(Photo: Martin Luther King Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

in the aisle. The driver asked the four seated behind the white section to give up their seats, and three of them did, but not Parks:

> I remained where I was. When the driver saw that I was still sitting there, he asked if I was going to stand up. I told him, no, I wasn't. He said, 'Well, if you don't stand up, I'm going to have you arrested'. I told him to go on and have me arrested.[36]

The driver left the bus and returned shortly, followed by police, who questioned Parks as to whether the driver had asked her to stand up. 'I said yes, and they wanted to know why I didn't. I told them I didn't think I should have to stand up. After I had paid my fare and occupied a seat, I didn't think I should have to give it up.'[37]

Parks was jailed. Soon after, Nixon arrived at the jailhouse along with Clifford and Virginia Durr to pay her bond. She later observed that what made the incident special was her arrest. 'If I had just been evicted from the bus and [police] hadn't placed me under arrest or had my charges brought against me, it probably could have been just another incident.'[38] When she chose arrest – rather than the dishonor of being forced to stand in favor of a white man – and took on a whole city's bus system, it was a turning point in American history.

The Montgomery bus boycott

As word spread that Parks had been arrested, Nixon went to work with Clifford Durr. Nixon had been born at the turn of the century into the terror of post-Reconstruction Alabama, and, having been unable to obtain more than twelve months of formal education, he educated himself. He was an exceptionally intelligent person, clear thinking and perceptive, even if the words expressed in his deep gravelly voice were not always grammatical. Parks had worked with Nixon for twelve years in the NAACP. As he described her, 'She was morally clean. . . . She wasn't afraid and she didn't get excited about anything. If there ever was a person that we woulda been able to break the situation that existed on the Montgomery city line, Rosa L. Parks was the woman to use.'[39]

The same night of Rosa Parks's arrest, Thursday, 1 December 1955, Jo Ann Robinson, a leader in the Women's Political Council since 1950 who had from time to time discussed the possibilities of a boycott as a means of resistance, was already working on an idea for such a measure against the city's bus system. Robinson and Nixon, joined by a local businessman named Rufus Lewis, had met at least four times between 1953 and 1955 with city and bus company officials to protest discriminatory

36. Ibid., p. 41.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 40.
39. E. D. Nixon, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., p. 43.

policies.[40] Robinson was also a member of the social and political action committee of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

Nixon – working with a map of the city, a quadrant and a slide rule – calculated that the bus boycott that the women's council had been discussing could work because there was nowhere in the city that you could not walk to, if you wished. He convened a meeting of the city's black pastors the next night to discuss the effort. He made a list of twenty-two ministers – Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy, Reverend H. H. Hubbard, Reverend Martin Luther King and so on – and started telephoning. The first two agreed immediately; however, the third was not so sure. 'Brother Nixon', King said, 'Let me think about it awhile, and call me back.'[41] Nixon proceeded until he had secured agreement from nineteen other parsons to attend. He then went back to the 26-year-old minister from Atlanta, who agreed to attend. 'I'm glad you agreed because I already set the meeting up to meet at your church,' Nixon told him. Although the ministers were to meet at Dexter, Nixon had designated another pastor to chair the session, with the stipulation that no permanent officers would be elected. King had not yet met Parks.

Robinson, meanwhile, was working throughout Thursday night to write and mimeograph 37,000 flyers announcing a one-day, city-wide boycott of the racially segregated bus system. The circulars announced:

> Don't ride the bus to work, to town, to school, to anyplace, Monday, December 5. . . . Another Negro woman has been arrested and put in jail because she refused to give up her seat. . . . Come to a mass meeting Monday at 7 p.m. at the Holt Street Baptist Church for further instructions.[42]

After daybreak, she and her son drove to each school in the black community, found their prearranged contact, and dropped off the stacks of handouts – each one printed from a rotating drum turned by hand – enough for every black Montgomery child to take one home. As Robinson had worked the borrowed mimeograph machine at Alabama State College, the telephone lines were busy with the members of the women's council making phone calls. Each woman phoned several others, and each of those phoned still more in a 'telephone tree' that branched out across the state capital until almost every black home with a telephone was reached. Robinson had calculated that the literature announcing the boycott needed to leave school with the students on Friday afternoon in order for families to have read and digested them before church on Sunday, when pastors all over the city would preach a call for unity and announce the protest.

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40. Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America,* op. cit., p. 16.
41. Ibid., p. 45.
42. Ibid., p. 46.

On Friday night, as the pastors discussed the idea of a boycott in the basement of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, many expressed grave doubts and caution. Some of them were wary about trying to change a system that had been intact since the turn of the century. A considerable portion of African-Americans, including significant numbers in the business community and among professional circles, were ambivalent about political change. Some were not even certain that they approved of the Supreme Court's ruling desegregating public schools. While white officials in oligarchic courthouses and legislatures across the region vented their fury at the judicial rulings, many in the black community viewed the high court's intervention as radical. They thought of Charles Hamilton Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C., and his protégé Thurgood Marshall, as interlopers. Their troublesome lawsuits – which challenged segregated schooling as an opening through which the entire doctrine of 'separate but equal' could be invalidated – were threatening to their status. Through years of accommodation, benefits had accrued to a black bourgeoisie that had come to have a vested interest in the way things were; any upheaval might jeopardize the modest security and standing that they had been able to build within the segregated system. Black ministers, black funeral directors, proprietors of black life-insurance firms, barbers and particularly black schoolteachers in a segregated system were not always sure they wanted change. The parsons meeting at Nixon's instigation reflected the deep forebodings found among the small élite of any Southern black community.

Nixon's job as a sleeping-car porter demanded that he leave town and, in his absence, it was agreed that the one-day protest should be supported. No decision was made on whether it should be extended. King joined with the Reverend Ralph T. Abernathy, the Reverend L. Roy Bennett and others in agreeing that 'no one should be identified as *the* leader'.[43] While this was Nixon's strategy, while he was temporarily away, the decision also revealed King's innate reluctance about stepping forward or assuming leadership.

On Sunday, the boycott was announced from the pulpits of the city's black churches. The same morning, the main newspaper in town, *The Montgomery Advertiser,* carried a front-page lead story leaked by Nixon and, in order to sensationalize the account, ran Robinson's leaflet in full. Everyone now knew. At dawn on Monday morning, 5 December, Parks, Robinson and Nixon peered into the darkness. They watched as the lighted buses of Montgomery lumbered out across the city, empty of their usual black

43. A. W. Wilson, interview with Donald T. Ferron, 27 February 1956, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956,* op. cit.

customers. Municipal officials and newspapers estimated that perhaps 90 percent of the black populace of 50,000 refused to ride the buses. The bus stops were empty. While one person rode a mule to his job, another used his horse-drawn trap; most people walked to their jobs.

That day Parks was tried in court for violating a city-wide segregation ordinance, convicted and fined $10. It was a legal blunder on the part of the city. If she had been charged with a civil offense, it might have proved difficult to appeal to a higher court. Having long studied the situation, however, Nixon was confident that they would go all the way to the Supreme Court.

As Nixon left City Hall after Parks's sentence, he fell into stride with two of the leading black ministers in town, Ralph Abernathy and E. N. French. They discussed another meeting of the town's black clergy that was to take place at 3 p.m., before the mass meeting at the Holt Street church that night. As they walked, Nixon proposed that they prepare an agenda and recommendations for the ministers' meeting. The three men came up with a name for their organization, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), and a set of mild demands, including first-come, first-served seating on the buses and 'more courtesy to Negro patrons' of the bus system. Abernathy leaned over to Nixon and asked if he would serve as president of the association. Nixon answered, 'not unless'n you all don't accept my man'. Abernathy asked him who his man was. Nixon replied: 'Martin Luther King.'[44] That afternoon, before the mass meeting, eighteen of the city's black pastors established the MIA, agreed on their demands and unanimously elected King to lead the group.

The election of King to head the boycott organization revealed not only Nixon's discernment and King's rising recognition in town as a strong advocate for civil rights, it also reflected the uncertainty of other pastors. Some feared the boycott could not be sustained and would collapse, leaving them embarrassed. Others thought King, who was new to town, would be better able to sidestep the various scrapes and conflicts that might arise within the group; he also had not compromised himself by making deals with city brokers. Nixon, who at the ministers' meeting had been sitting in the balcony looking down on the others below, rose as he heard uncertainty being expressed. He lambasted the pastors for their timidity:

> What the hell you people talkin' 'bout? How you gonna have a mass meeting, gonna boycott a city bus line without the white folks knowing it? . . . You oughta make up your mind right now that you gon' either admit you are a grown man or concede to the fact that you are a bunch of scared boys.[45]

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44. Nixon, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested,* op. cit., p. 48.
45. Ibid., p. 49.

Either rising to the occasion, or perhaps taking the bait, King sternly responded that he was not a coward and that no one called him a coward. The session was to be decisive in King's life and also in the life of the mass movement. With the formation of the MIA, the hub of the action switched to the churches and, as long as the protest lasted, the ministers remained in the vanguard. Nixon pointedly 'forgot' to telephone a report of these meetings to the NAACP national office in New York City until the boycott was underway. He later explained that he doubted whether the headquarters, which gave priority to court challenges, would have endorsed direct action. The rapidity with which the command shifted from Parks, Robinson and Nixon on 1 December to King on 5 December was astounding.

The black clubs and organizations that originally incubated the idea of boycott, starting in the early 1950s, were small in members. Each association leader spoke only for his or her own constituency. These groups represented the élite of Montgomery's black community. They were often at odds with each other. Many individuals who were politically active and might have become leaders for the entire community lacked economic independence, and anyone who would step forward and gain the exposure necessary to activate the entire black community would also engender the animosity of the white superstructure and be dismissed from his or her job.

The church, in contrast, spanned the divisions that otherwise could keep a community from coming together and remain as one. It served all the people, in every station of life. It included every political persuasion, was respected by everyone and was economically autonomous from white intrusion. Accountable solely to their congregations or denominations, its clergy did not fear job loss from white retaliation. Physically, too, the churches had edifices, fellowship halls, bulletins, telephones and mimeograph machines. In a city lacking black radio stations and a black newspaper, their networks gave them the ability to spread information.

In the mass meeting of 5 December at the Holt Street Baptist Church, King's remarks were a 'masterpiece', Nixon recalled. By prearrangement at the afternoon meeting, it was decided that the boycott would be maintained until courteous treatment was afforded by bus drivers, seating was on a first-come, first-served basis and black bus operators were hired. A large offering of $785 was collected.[46] Although King declared that 'we are not here advocating violence', and spoke of being courageous and nonviolent, he did not mention the word *nonviolence* or the term *nonviolent resistance*. He said, 'Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love.'[47]

The preparedness of Parks's action, the shrewdness of Robinson's organizational skills and the self-educated sophistication of Nixon each played

46. Ibid.

47. King, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956,* op. cit., p. 73.

a highly significant role in launching King to the forefront of a remarkably successful city-wide campaign and thence to national leadership. The entire world soon learned about him.[48]

Along with a well-organized car pool, the city's eight black taxi companies and their fleet of sixty or seventy cars provided alternative service for 10 cents. Although transportation was effectively organized, thousands walked. King later remembered a 72-year-old woman who spoke with 'ungrammatical profundity' when she said, 'My feets is tired, but my soul is rested.'[49] The city authorities tried to break the boycott by getting automobile insurance companies to cancel policies, but Lloyd's of London underwrote the coverage instead.[50] Showing a willingness to endure any consequences from their action, the community pulled together to sustain itself and the year-long bus boycott established, indisputably, the ability of black citizens to band together in the successful use of nonviolent sanctions.

During this period, a curious interplay developed between the white women of Montgomery and the black women they hired as their housekeepers. Virginia Durr recalled that the mayor issued a proclamation that all black domestic workers should be fired, in an effort to break the boycott. This prompted many white women to declare that the mayor could, instead, come and clean their houses. White matrons ended up driving their black housekeepers to work, thereby helping the boycott. Durr remembered the protest as an absurd dance:

> I saw a woman that worked for my mother-in-law, and they were asking her, 'Do any of your family take part in the boycott?' She said, 'No ma'am, they don't have anything to do with the boycott at all. . . . They just stay off the bus and don't have nothing to do with it.' I said [to her] . . . everybody in your family's involved in the boycott. . . . She says, 'When you have your hand in the lion's mouth, the best thing to do is pat it on the head.'[51]

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48. 'If Mrs. Parks had got up and given that white man her seat', Nixon later noted, 'you'd never aheard of Rev. King.' Nixon, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., pp. 50, 51. For his part, King showed unassuming integrity: 'I neither started the protest nor suggested it,' he wrote. 'I simply responded to the call of the people for a spokesman.' It was left to him to give a proper sense of perspective and say that 'more than any other person', Jo Ann Robinson 'was active on every level of the protest'. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 78.

49. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail [written 16 April 1963]', in Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 266.

50. Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 39.

51. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, with Sarah Flynn, 'Voice of Freedom', in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), pp. 27, 28. Durr also thought the boycott relieved some of the deep internal dichotomy plaguing the minds of white Southerners.

King's experience in Montgomery, Alabama, was crucial to his personal, religious and political development as a nonviolent leader; it was equally decisive as the catalyst for a decade of mobilizing. King's moral and intellectual understanding would grow and change as the result of the boycott. He added to his blending of Love and justice a militant call for social transformation in the context of the basic ideals of democracy. A freedom song's refrain, sung in the Montgomery mass meetings, exuded this theme: 'We know love is the watchword for peace and liberty.' It was after the boycott that King's coalescence of *agape* Love and democracy were brought together and focused in profound certainty about the power of nonviolent action for achieving them.

The boycott sets the parameters of nonviolent struggle

A few days after the start of the bus boycott, in December 1955, *The Montgomery Advertiser* published a letter from a white woman named Juliette Morgan that noted, 'The Negroes of Montgomery seem to have taken a lesson from Gandhi – and our own Thoreau, who influenced Gandhi. Their own task is greater than Gandhi's, however, for they have greater prejudice to overcome.'[52] She compared the boycott to Gandhi's 1930 Salt March. Inquiring as to who she was, the MIA found that she was a young librarian who lived with her mother.

In fact, within the black community, strenuous efforts were underway to explain the example of the Indian struggle, and many of the methods used by Gandhi were innovatively employed. Mass meetings were frequently held in the city's black churches, rotating from one to another, each a reiteration of unity, as ministers of many churches joined to lead. People of all ages thronged houses of worship. Some sat on window sills, squatted on steps leading up to a balcony, stood in the back, or even hung onto the boughs of trees and peered in through the windows. Night after night, the singing and preaching retaught lessons from Jesus' life, with injunctions of the Bible. Skits and dramatizations portrayed Gandhi's approaches and different techniques for nonviolent resistance and nonretaliation.

The boycott itself was a complex operation, but simple measures were tried as well. King wrote with obvious pride about the effectiveness of one small strategy that showed ingenuity. Following a particularly large rally of 8,000 men and women who gathered in two churches one night, the radio made an announcement about the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan –

The protest, Durr felt, assuaged some of the guilt felt by whites, who were often ashamed of their complicity in keeping blacks bowed down by injustice. As a child, 'you have devotion to [black people] . . . when you get grown, people tell you they're not worthy of you, they're different. And then you're torn apart, because here are the people you've loved and depended on.' Ibid.

52. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, op. cit., p. 77.

anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic as well as anti-black – were planning a 'night-ride' through the Negro community:

> Ordinarily, threats of Klan action were a signal to the Negroes to go into their houses, close the doors, pull the shades, or turn off the lights. Fearing death, they played dead. But this time they had prepared a surprise. When the Klan arrived – according to the newspapers 'about forty carloads of robed and hooded members' – porch lights were on and doors open. As the Klan drove by, the Negroes behaved as though they were watching a circus parade. Concealing the effort it cost them, many walked about as usual; some simply watched from their steps; a few waved at the passing cars. After a few blocks, the Klan, nonplussed, turned off into a sidestreet and disappeared.[53]

This modest story illustrates several mechanisms in nonviolent resistance: the overcoming of fear, the significance of the unexpected and the need for cleverness to outwit the adversary.

King's mettle continued to show itself. He may have been the youngest of the city's black parsons and had the fewest strikes against him, but he was also the best prepared intellectually, and he increasingly revealed the magnanimity that makes great leaders. A pattern of harassment that was to last for the rest of his life started in Montgomery. Every imaginable effort was attempted to break his spirit: hundreds of hate letters, arrests on petty traffic violations and the sowing of dissension within the ranks of the black ministers, some of whom accused King of grandstanding and hogging publicity. At one point, his response was to offer his resignation as president of the MIA, which was, predictably, rejected.

On 30 January 1956, the parsonage of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church was bombed. King rushed back to his family and found that Coretta and their first-born were safe. Once assured, he turned around to see angry black neighbors simmering, jostling the police and municipal authorities, including the mayor and police commissioner, who had come by (in acknowledgment that King was achieving some national attention). Stung by the attempted killing of the pastor and his family, some of his neighbors had vengeance on their minds. Many were armed. At that moment, the grandson of slaves stood in the dense Alabama darkness on the portico of his bombed-out home, held up his hand for silence, looked into the eyes of his upset kindred, and spoke to them of forgiveness, restraint and the redemptive power of righteousness. 'I want you to go home and put down your weapons,' he told the crowd. 'We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. . . . We must meet hate with love.' His voice shaking, he declared that the would-be killers could not halt the movement because he was not indispensable: 'Remember, if I am stopped our work will not

53. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 162.

stop.' He reiterated his commitment to the principles of Christianity and nonviolence: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Remember that is what God said. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies.'[54]

Such was the force of his sincerity and the potency of his faith that the people put aside their talk of retaliation and went home. The perpetrators of violence who might have killed his wife and baby were misguided, King thought; they were caught up in the collective evil inveighed by Niebuhr. The country, seeing how he was able to rise above loathing and malice, marveled. It was, if not Martin Luther King's greatest speech, his finest hour. The spirit of the movement yet to unfold was imprinted on the minds of observers the world over.

The parameters of strategic nonviolence for the civil rights movement of the 1960s were established by the Montgomery bus boycott, and these were derived from Gandhi: 'While the Montgomery boycott was going on', King said, 'India's Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique of nonviolent social change.'[55] To the extent that there is a moment at which the nonviolent parameters for the decade-long American struggle were drawn, it would coincide with the instant following the bombing of the parsonage when the disinclined King was recognized to have stature beyond his years. Yet the solidification of his principles into a political and all-encompassing creed would have to await a renewed encounter with the subject of nonviolent struggle.

Resident Gandhian tutors

After moving to Montgomery, the Kings kept a pistol in the parsonage, something not particularly startling in the Deep South. Even in its cities, the South retained rural characteristics. It was closer to the frontier mentality and had inherited from the barbarous practices of slave overseers a tolerance of weapons: in an agrarian society, guns were always at hand for killing hogs, hunting game for food or to put a horse out of its misery and learning to use arms was often a rite of passage into adulthood.

After the parsonage was bombed, floodlights were set up to illuminate the grounds throughout the night, and sentries were posted. When dynamite was tossed on E. D. Nixon's lawn on 1 February 1956, King decided to avert any risk and allowed his watchmen to carry pistols and shotguns, and even to bring them inside the parsonage. He and Ralph Abernathy applied

54. Joe Azbell, 'Blast Rocks Residence of Bus Boycott Leader', 31 January 1956, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956*, op. cit.

55. Martin Luther King Jr, 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi', *Ebony*, July 1959, in James Melvin Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 23.

to the county sheriff for pistol permits.[56] King described these steps as a matter of self-defense and, when questioned as to whether this was compatible with a nonviolent movement, answered that there was no intention of hurting anyone unless he and the security teams were first attacked with violence.

Sometime later, he became unsure about this decision and began to feel that there was, indeed, a contradiction between leading a nonviolent movement and authorizing the use of weapons to protect himself and his family. Despite an avowal that he had banned guns after discussing the problem with his wife, two months into the boycott visitors reported that King's bodyguards had an 'arsenal'.[57]

One of King's earliest callers was Bayard Rustin, a black socialist and conscientious objector during the Second World War who spent twenty-eight months in jail during the war. He had, in the 1920s, been a disciple of A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Randolph had threatened a march on Washington, planned for June 1941, which, although called off, had forced President Roosevelt to issue an executive order banning racial discrimination in the defense industries. This was the precursor for the 1963 national march, in which Rustin would play a major part. (Along with other black leaders, in 1947, Randolph had pressured President Truman to issue an executive order desegregating the armed services.) Rustin was also active in CORE and, until 1953, worked for FOR.

At the time Rustin visited the parsonage, he was employed by the War Resisters League in New York. In February 1956, shortly after the bus boycott had begun, he received a telegram from the writer Lillian Smith, a white Georgian. The author of the acclaimed anti-lynching novel *Strange Fruit*, which created a stir in the 1940s, she was one of the first white Southerners to support King publicly. As a member of the board of directors of FOR, she had been impressed with Rustin's familiarity with Gandhi. In 1948, as chair of the Free India Committee in the United States, Rustin had been invited by the Indian National Congress for a six-month sojourn to study Gandhi's campaigns. Knowing of Rustin's exposure to the Indian freedom struggle and its methods, Smith thought that Rustin should go to Montgomery to advise King, since the young minister lacked experience in the techniques of nonviolent struggle.[58] She also wrote King and recommended Rustin as one of the few Northern outsiders she would be willing to trust to help the infant protest.[59]

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56. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 62.
57. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 141; Glenn E. Smiley to John Swomley and Alfred Hassler, 29 February 1956, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956*, op. cit.
58. Bayard Rustin, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., p. 53.
59. Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen: A Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 185.

Regarded as a brilliant strategist, the 44-year-old Rustin was to help King develop the steely self-discipline demanded by Gandhian approaches and to widen the Montgomery action into a sophisticated, political usage of nonviolence in a broad-based movement. As a result, he decided to resign from his responsibilities at FOR and work for King full time. This was a controversial move, because he had been associated during the 1930s with the Young Communist League and had, three years earlier, been convicted in Pasadena, California, for homosexual activity.[60] Not everyone around Rustin in New York viewed him through Lillian Smith's admiring lenses. At a meeting in the office of A. Philip Randolph, the idea of Rustin's trek was condemned by those who feared that his personal and political history would hurt King. Randolph and A. J. Muste, however, shared their approval of Smith's recommendation. Randolph had heard through E. D. Nixon that Rustin was welcome and shared the notion that the city-wide protest could become a launching pad for a mass movement across the South.[61] The War Resisters League allowed Rustin to leave for his assignment.

When Rustin first arrived on 21 February 1956, King was out of town. He spent his first evening meeting with Abernathy and Nixon and attending an MIA session. On a walk later that night, he came across the round-the-clock team of armed black security men, illuminated by strung light bulbs, who were guarding the homes of King and Abernathy. After King returned, Rustin called at the parsonage on 26 February and Coretta immediately recognized him as a FOR lecturer and remembered a speech he had given at her high school during the early 1940s. He laid out the details of his controversial past and listened as King responded that the protest in Montgomery needed all the help it could get.[62] Rustin was seventeen years older than King.

Rustin was, however, alarmed that a gun had been left lying in a chair in the living room during his meeting.[63] This was inappropriate for a Gandhian leader, Rustin explained to his host:

> If in the heat and flow of battle a leader's house is bombed and he shoots back, then that is an encouragement to his followers to pick up guns. If, on the other hand, he has no guns around him, and his followers know it, then they will rise to the nonviolent occasion.[64]

60. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 66.
61. Anderson, *Bayard Rustin*, op. cit.
62. Ibid.
63. Bayard Rustin, interview with T. H. Baker, 17 June 1969, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956,* op. cit.; Bayard Rustin, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested,* op. cit., p. 53.
64. Anderson, *Bayard Rustin*, op. cit.

Although the history of the United States is rich in a tradition of nonviolent resistance, geographically it was previously centered around New England and Pennsylvania, areas where the quest for freedom of conscience was inseparable from the creation of states as political entities. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, and the Mennonite peace church had exercised influence on the formation of the Union. Bible-study and peace societies flourished along the Atlantic seaboard in the colonial period, many of them explicitly nonviolent in their convictions. The Revolutionary War phase was replete with boycotts, nonimportation strategies, protest demonstrations of all sorts and various methods of noncooperation used by the American colonists against the British. Those who had emigrated across the Atlantic Ocean formed their own institutions and bypassed British laws.[65] A salient example of nonviolent struggle was the clash over the accommodation of slavery by the Founding Fathers and subsequent decades of the fight for its abolition, a battle that included a number of former slaves in its leadership. The women's suffrage movement began as an outgrowth of the abolitionist movement, as Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott urged freedom for both slaves and disfranchised women. Indeed, the first support for sit-ins and protest rides in the United States may have been in 1838, when a policy of support for such measures was adopted by the Antislavery Convention of American Women.[66] From William Penn in 1681 to William James in 1910, the United States had furrowed promising soil in which King could cast the seeds of nonviolent direct action. The growth of the labor movement in the 1930s was largely advanced through marches, boycotts and strikes, and important gains were made under the banners of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Yet there is no evidence that King was aware of such powerful antecedents. Trade unions were, after all, often either indifferent or antagonistic toward blacks, particularly in the South. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the white Southern Baptists not only acceded to slavery, they became its staunch defenders. For economic reasons, they were willing to compromise their fundamental commitment to individual freedoms. The Georgia constitution, as originally adopted in 1733, for example, prohibited slavery in the state, but the practice was later endorsed by the powerful white Baptist leadership and the prohibitory clause was removed. The other major Protestant denomination in the South, the Methodists, organized in

65. Walter H. Conser Jr, Ronald M. McCarthy and David J. Toscano, 'The American Independence Movement, 1765–1775: A Decade of Nonviolent Struggles', in Walter H. Conser Jr, Ronald M. McCarthy and David J. Toscano (eds.), *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765–1775* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986), pp. 3–21.

66. Carleton Mabee, *Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 through the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 115.

1784, originally condemned slavery in the strongest terms but, by 1844, had split from their Northern counterparts because of their support for human bondage. The tradition of grass-roots black resistance had nurtured its own historic resistance to the fetid slave system, and stood geographically, religiously and politically outside the tradition that had produced Henry David Thoreau. When King encountered Thoreau at Morehouse, it was his first intellectual foray into the theory of civil resistance. Besides, the black community in Montgomery, as elsewhere, was armed and not everyone was receptive to hearing of justice as correcting that which revolts against Love. Rustin was rightly concerned that his newfound exemplar of militant nonviolence might stumble without a deeper foundation.

Organizationally, Rustin was impressed with the twenty-three dispatch centers where the protesters could wait for rides in the black sections of Montgomery. In addition to the pooled taxis and borrowed cars used as a transportation service, there were three other methods of transportation: hitch-hiking, transportation of domestic help by white homemakers and walking. King introduced Rustin to a man who was walking seven miles a day and another who daily hiked fourteen miles.[67] At one meeting, King despaired of finding more cars to help the people on foot. When the session ended, Rustin telephoned A. Philip Randolph for advice. Randolph told Rustin to go to Birmingham, where black steelworkers earned enough to buy two cars, and ask them to donate their second cars. They did.[68]

In the midst of this bewilderment, Rustin formed an enduring and creative alliance with King, whom he found to have the right instincts, an ability to blend faith with strategic planning, and receptivity to the persistence that undergirded nonviolent resistance. While assailing King with books and discussions on Gandhi, Rustin handled his correspondence, composed songs for mass meetings, organized car pools, wrote working papers and news releases, raised money, secured legal assistance and arranged bail.

As the African-American news media reported on the unity and cohesion of the Montgomery protest, it was kindling the spirits of blacks across the South and catalyzing the energies of black leaders from all political viewpoints across the country. Bayard Rustin was one among a group of socialists, pacifists, communists and radical Christians – some of them black like Rustin – who were exhilarated by King and thought he held promise for taking the fight for justice to a new order of magnitude unlike anything the country had seen since the abolition of slavery.

It was Rustin who interpreted a crucial aspect of Gandhian strategy such that King, Abernathy and the other leaders could realize that they

67. Bayard Rustin, 'Montgomery Diary', in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 57.

68. Anderson, *Bayard Rustin*, op. cit.

should not regard arrests and jailings as onerous burdens, but as significant opportunities. When you go to jail, Rustin admonished, make it into a party! It's your chance to make a testament. Do it joyfully. Sing, clap and chant! Don't wait to be rounded up. Walk with a light step, deliberately and happily, toward the waiting police vans. Experience the exhilaration that comes from knowing that this is your moment to invite suffering on yourself, because this is the instant when you can show the truth of your goals and persuade.

When 100 leaders of the bus protest were indicted in early February 1956, consequently, few of them waited for the police. They walked with heads held high to the station and surrendered. E. D. Nixon was the first and walked in saying boldly, 'You looking for me? Here I am.'[69] King was able to take this crucial morsel of understanding and imbue the civil rights movement with an appreciation of how Gandhian self-suffering works.

Rustin had a strong sense of presence, an analytical mind and opinions that had been honed over the years. He possessed unusual insights and was not afraid to express them. Despite his acumen, however, soft-spoken Southerners of whatever race sometimes felt Rustin to be an abrasive Northerner. His detractors began to outnumber his admirers.[70] Rumors were spread that he was a communist organizer, trained in Moscow and planning to stage a violent uprising. Complaints reached A. Philip Randolph in New York, who telegraphed Rustin that he should return. Instead, Rustin went to Birmingham, for a short time, and continued to advise King.[71]

'When the gun gets too heavy, you will put it down'

John Swomley, successor to A. J. Muste at FOR, arranged for King's 'tutorials' to continue under someone considered equally competent but perhaps more cordial. Glenn E. Smiley was a white, Texas-born Methodist minister who, along with Rustin, had been a field secretary with FOR in the 1940s and was also imprisoned as a conscientious objector during the Second World War. One of the country's few seasoned trainers in Gandhian methods, he had organized three and a half months of sit-ins against the 350-seat Bullock's Tea Room, in Los Angeles in the 1940s, to stop the establishment's policy of racial discrimination, ending in 'complete victory'.[72] Staunch, committed

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69. Rustin, 'Montgomery Diary', op. cit., p. 56.
70. 'Even the shrewd and intelligent help of Bayard Rustin verged on a kind of manipulation I disliked', wrote Harris Wofford Jr; 'steeped in Gandhian lore . . . Rustin seemed ever-present with advice, and sometimes acted as if King were a precious puppet.' Harris Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), p. 115.
71. Anderson, *Bayard Rustin*, op. cit.
72. Glenn Smiley, 'A Pebble Thrown into the Pond', *Fellowship* [the magazine of FOR], June 1989, p. 8.

and thoroughly professional, Smiley considered Rustin to be his 'American guru'. Rustin and Smiley initially overlapped in Montgomery early in 1956. The two FOR veterans were united in their concern that King's comprehension was not so deep as would be necessary for a national leader of a nonviolent mass movement – what they and others had in mind for him. After his arrival on 27 February 1956, two months into the boycott, Smiley wrote in a report to Muriel Lester at FOR that his meeting with King had convinced him that God had called King to lead a major movement. About King, he summarized:

> He had Gandhi in mind when this thing started, he says. Is aware of the dangers to him inwardly, wants to do it right, but is too young and some of his close help is violent. King accepts, as an example, a body guard, and asked for a permit for them to carry guns. This was denied by the police, but nevertheless, the place is an arsenal. King sees the inconsistency but not enough. . . . The whole movement is armed in a sense. . . . At first King was asked merely to be the spokesman of the movement, but . . . he has really become the real leader and symbol of growing magnitude. . . . Soon he will be able to direct the movement by the sheer force of being the symbol of resistance.[73]

Smiley noticed that King rarely used the word *nonviolence* and seemed to prefer the nineteenth-century term *passive resistance*, which Gandhi had discarded after reading Thoreau.[74] Working systematically, first Rustin and then Smiley reintroduced King to the works of Gandhi and discussed books on nonviolent struggle.

One of the books that King reread was *The Power of Nonviolence* by Richard Gregg, a white Southerner and a Quaker. Gregg had spent four years in India studying Gandhi's methods while the Mahatma was still alive. Writing in exquisite prose, he did as much as anyone to interpret Gandhi for Western audiences. Gregg soon began to correspond with King. Another book that made a significant imprint was *War without Violence*, by Krishnalal Shridharani, a young associate of Gandhi's who participated in the Salt March, and who is quoted in Chapter One. Smiley called the volume 'a tiny pebble . . . thrown into the pond', and three decades later he considered that 'the resulting ripples and waves have not, even to this day, reached the distant shores of our planet'.[75] Originally published in 1939 from his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, and filled with vivid and picturesque details, the small book is a lucid, firsthand analysis of Gandhian theories and techniques. During the 1940s, it had been avidly studied by A. Philip

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73. Glenn Smiley to Muriel Lester, 28 February 1956; Smiley to John Swomley and Alfred Hassler (Editor of *Fellowship*), 29 February 1956, cited in Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, op. cit., p. 25.
74. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 72.
75. Smiley, 'A Pebble Thrown into the Pond', op. cit., p. 8.

Randolph and A. J. Muste, among numerous others.[76] It was often passed hand to hand.

While being plied with reading matter, King's security men and some of the deacons and lay leaders of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church still insisted that King carry a gun. More than three months into the bus boycott, Rustin had reported to colleagues in FOR that while King rejected violence, there was 'considerable confusion on the question as to whether violence is justified in retaliation to violence directed against the Negro community'.[77] The issue of armed self-defense kept coming up and whether, if attacked, retaliation was in order. King carried a gun for a period of time, but began to feel uncomfortable with the practice and confided in Smiley regarding his doubts. King asked him when he thought he should give it up, to which Smiley responded, 'When the gun gets too heavy, you will put it down.'[78]

King's ambiguity about the need to defend himself, and with violence if necessary, soon solidified into outright disavowal of violence. Rustin described King's evolution as follows:

> Over several weeks . . . Dr King continuously deepened his commitment to nonviolence and, within six weeks, he had demanded that there be no armed guards and no effort at associating himself in any form with violence. . . . I take no credit for Dr King's development, but I think the fact that Dr King had someone around recommending certain readings and discussing these things with him was helpful to bring up in him what was already obviously there.[79]

In March 1956, Rustin returned to New York, leaving both Montgomery and Birmingham behind him.[80] King continued to write accounts on the progress of the boycott for Rustin, to help his work on behalf of the Montgomery protest in New York.

As the new resident adviser, Smiley wondered why God had laid

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76. Ibid. In 1941, shortly after finishing at Howard University's theology school, James Farmer, then with FOR and soon to found CORE, met and consulted with Shridharani, whom he remembered as a *brahmin*, and whose firsthand account of the Salt March stirred the imaginations of the advocates around FOR. Farmer, 'On Cracking White City', op. cit., p. 28.
77. Rustin, 'Report on Montgomery, Alabama', 21 March 1956, as cited in Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956*, op. cit.
78. Glenn E. Smiley to Martin Luther King Jr, recalled by James M. Lawson Jr, interview with the author, Los Angeles, California, 27 February 1996. Lawson learned of this interchange directly from Smiley.
79. Bayard Rustin, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., p. 53.
80. Among those deploring Rustin's departure was Homer Jack, a white clergyman from Evanston, Illinois, and Editor of *The Gandhi Reader*. He thought Rustin's contributions in interpreting Gandhi for King could not be overestimated. Anderson, *Trouble I've Seen*, op. cit.

hands on someone 'so young, so inexperienced, so good'.[81] As Smiley recalled, King asked him to 'teach him everything [Smiley] knew about nonviolence, since by his own admission he had only been casually acquainted with Gandhi and his methods'.[82] In contrast to the thousands of years of settling conflicts by violence, domination or subjugation, King believed nonviolence held potential for reconciliation and, thus, realization of what he termed 'the beloved community'.[83] King knew that changes were taking place in his own mind:

> When I went to Montgomery as a pastor, I had not the slightest idea that I would later become involved in a crisis in which nonviolent resistance would be applicable. . . . When the protest began, my mind, consciously or unconsciously, was driven back to the Sermon on the Mount, with its sublime teachings on love, and the Gandhian method of nonviolent resistance. As the days unfolded, I came to see the power of nonviolence more and more. Living through the actual experience of the protest, nonviolence became more than a method to which I gave intellectual assent; it became a commitment to a way of life.[84]

Gandhi's works 'deeply fascinated' him, and he wrote that 'the whole Gandhian concept of *satyagraha* (*satya* is truth which equals love, and *graha* is force; *satyagraha* thus means truth-force or love-force)' became profoundly significant to him.[85] No longer viewing nonviolent struggle as solely a practical matter, King acknowledged the moral and spiritual value of what Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had taught the world.

After 381 days of boycott

The court case stemming from Rosa Parks's action went forward through the legal system and eventually reached the Supreme Court, which ruled on 13 November 1956 that local laws requiring segregation on buses were unconstitutional. Careful planning had gone into preparation for the boycott, and the return to the buses was similarly designed. King and the MIA threshed out a theme: 'We must not take this as a victory over the white man, but as a victory for justice and democracy.'[86] Just as training sessions had earlier taught nonretaliation, meetings were arranged to prepare

81. Smiley, letter to Muriel Lester, op. cit.
82. Glenn Smiley, *Nonviolence: The Gentle Persuader* (Nyack, New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1991), p. 5.
83. Martin Luther King Jr, 'The Power of Nonviolence', in James Melvin Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr,* op. cit., p. 12.
84. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 101.
85. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence', *Christian Century*, No. 77, 13 April 1960, p. 440.
86. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 163.

for any harassment when the black community resumed riding the buses. A simulated bus was erected in place of the pulpit in Ralph Abernathy's church and various people acted out the parts of stubborn whites who refused to accept the court's judgment. Before long, virtually every church movement had a make-believe bus with amplifiers so that overflow crowds could hear the role-playing enactment of how to handle hostile whites.[87] Smiley drafted some rules for schoolchildren and, once again, *The Montgomery Advertiser*, thinking it had a scoop, published the leaflet so that thousands saw its advice: 'Be quiet but friendly; proud, but not arrogant; joyous, but not boisterous.'[88] King was dismayed, however, that not one white group in the city would take comparable responsibility and brief white citizens:

> We tried to get the white ministerial alliance to make a simple statement calling for courtesy and Christian brotherhood, but in spite of the favorable response of a few ministers . . . the majority 'dared not get involved in such a controversial issue'. This was a deep disappointment.[89]

When the bus integration order finally arrived in town on 20 December 1956, having been received from the clerk of the Supreme Court in Washington, a mass meeting was scheduled for that night at St John A.M.E. Church. King reminded the ebullient overflow crowd that it was more honorable to have walked in dignity than to have ridden in humiliation and that, despite the struggle of the community against insurmountable odds, he had faith that 'the arc of the moral universe, although long, is bending toward justice'. The people, he said, 'kept going with the conviction that truth crushed to earth will rise again'. He closed by requesting understanding for those who had oppressed them and asked the congregation to appreciate the adjustments that the court order would bring upon them. 'We seek an integration based on mutual respect,' King said. He warned that 'twelve months of glorious dignity' would have been for naught if violence were now to be used: 'As we go back to the buses let us be loving enough to turn an enemy into a friend. We must now move from protest to reconciliation.'[90] After the meeting, King asked the ministers to spread out two by two to ride the bus lines for the next few days, especially during rush hours, to reinforce the determination to avoid retaliation to any insults.

That same night, Smiley and King went to an all-night eatery for barbecued spareribs, where the two ate pig-ear sandwiches. Smiley told King, 'Tomorrow I want to be paid, for I have been working here for the whole year with the FOR paying my expenses, and now I think it is time to

87. Smiley, *Nonviolence: The Gentle Persuader*, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.
88. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 164.
89. Ibid., p. 169.
90. Ibid., p. 172.

collect my salary.' King responded that he would pay him anything within his power and asked him to name his price. 'I want to be the first to ride by you in an integrated bus,' Smiley said.[91] The demand amused and surprised King, who hugged Smiley with boyish laughter. King invited Smiley, Ralph Abernathy and E. D. Nixon to ride the first racially integrated bus with him the next day. At approximately 6 a.m., when the bus appeared and the doors opened, King stepped aboard and put his fare in the box. 'I believe you are Reverend King, aren't you?' the driver asked. King responded affirmatively. 'We are glad to have you this morning,' he replied. King sat down with Smiley by his side, with Abernathy and Nixon behind them. He later recalled, 'So I rode the first integrated bus in Montgomery with a white minister, and a native Southerner, as my seatmate.'[92]

Smiley rode twenty-eight buses on the first day and witnessed three acts of violence. 'I wanted to cut him to ribbons,' one woman told Smiley, after being knocked down and bloodied by a white man; it was 'only last night [that] I was able to tell myself and that little man (Dr. King) that tomorrow if I am hit when I ride the bus, I am not going to hit back'.[93] Despite the restraint of the black community, soon after, white terrorists rose again and the Klan marched. Gunfire hit buses, a pregnant woman was shot, a teenaged girl was beaten, and a number of homes and churches were bombed. Still, the knots of fear in the black community had been unraveled, and the people would not cringe again. Furthermore, the ugliness and fanaticism of white-supremacist extremism revolted many whites. Discipline held tight and, before long, desegregation began to proceed without calamity.

The 381 days of boycott meant success for the African-Americans of Montgomery, and it brought King national and international stature. He became the leading symbolic personage for the awakening in the Southland, despite his initial reticence and age of only 26. Fulfillment from the Montgomery protest led the studious young pastor to undertake a process of rediscovery, at the instigation of specialists, and through this inquiry, to absorb the theories and techniques disclosed in the writings of Gandhi in a different way. His pilgrimage had begun as an intellectual exercise that combined theological study with deep beliefs in the social responsibility required of Christians. Convinced by seminary that nonviolence was practical for a minority – as stated earlier, a matter of arithmetic – his view deepened in graduate school, as he placed nonviolent struggle within a larger theological spectrum. Now he began serious engagement with the use of its politics, methods and tactics. It was through Gandhi that King learned how to stand face to face with power.

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91. Smiley, *Nonviolence: The Gentle Persuader*, op. cit., pp. 19, 20.
92. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 172, 173.
93. Smiley, *Nonviolence: The Gentle Persuader*, op. cit., pp. 20, 21.

Rediscovery of Gandhi

Having been vindicated by the highest court in the land, King found himself viewed as heroic by people in the United States and abroad. At home, he suffered doubts and torments. He had been reluctant to take direction of the protest; E. D. Nixon and others had taunted him, forcing his hand, telling him that he would seem a coward if he did not assume the guidance of the Montgomery association. He was not altogether sure that his religious calling included this leadership capacity. The biblical passage that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country had prepared King for the criticism of those in the Montgomery community who resented his celebrity.

The National Baptist Convention, the denominational entity with which King and his church were affiliated, saw nonviolent action as questionable and impolite. Despite his father's standing, many felt threatened by King and thought he could hurt their status and prestige; a great number were openly cold to him. Some were committed to the notion of a 'separate but equal' society of their own because they could dominate it. A rump group within the convention stood by King, but others did not even want him to address the denomination. With its decentralized structure, in which each congregation elected its minister, the fractious black Baptist ministers would have been hard to mobilize under the best of circumstances. The NAACP and its leader, Roy Wilkins, also regarded King as an interloper, often openly ridiculing his ideas of nonviolent resistance. They wanted nothing that might alter their preeminence and opposed the formation of another organization.

Despite these problems, Bayard Rustin and Glenn Smiley began to discuss the future with King, and started planning for the establishment of what would come to be called the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). They thought it was essential to sustain the momentum from Montgomery and translate that experience into a strategy for the region. Stanley David Levison, a lawyer in New York, was spurred into action and came to help form the new leadership conference, urging it not to make the same mistakes that he and others had made. A former supporter of the Communist Party but by then an opponent of the communists, Levison, a Jew, eventually became one of King's closest confidants. Rustin, Smiley and Levison were among those who were convinced that a group needed to be institutionalized if their hopes of a broad movement coming into being were ever to be fulfilled.

On New Year's Day 1957, King got together with the Reverend C. K. Steele of the Tallahassee, Florida, bus boycott, which had been coterminous with the Montgomery action, and the Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth, the backbone of resistance in Birmingham. The three pastors mailed out about a hundred invitations to a meeting at Ebenezer Baptist Church, in Atlanta, scheduled for 10–11 January, only three weeks

after the end of the Montgomery boycott. At the meeting, working papers were provided by Rustin and Ella J. Baker, who, when she had been national field secretary and director of field offices for the NAACP, had worked with E. D. Nixon to strengthen the Montgomery chapter. While King and Abernathy rushed back to Montgomery to handle a spate of bombings at four churches and two parsonages, Coretta Scott King and Shuttlesworth presided over the session, with Rustin and Baker at hand.[94] Rustin viewed the gathering as momentous:

> Sixty Negro leaders had come from 29 localities of 10 Southern states for the first session of the Negro Leaders Conference on Non-violent Integration. . . . Leaders struggling with economic boycotts and reprisals in South Carolina were standing in a corner exchanging views with 'strong men' from the Mississippi Delta, who are forced to carry on their work at night, underground. The first person to take the floor was a man who had been shot because he had dared to vote.[95]

When King returned, he jubilantly reported that no one had been hurt in the six bombings, which he interpreted as a sign of providential intervention. At the end of the session, Rustin recalled, King 'spoke movingly on the power of nonviolence'. As King and Rustin left the hall, they recollected Howard Thurman's report, from his 1936 meeting with Gandhi, which stated that it might be up to American blacks to deliver to the world the message of nonviolence.[96]

In response to King's insistence that the word *Christian* be incorporated into the name of the group being formed, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was thus born. King was elected president, a post he held until his assassination. Its adopted motto, 'To Redeem the Soul of America', reflected its base among church leaders and intention to bring about redemptive nonviolent change. A series of meetings followed in various cities, and the Packinghouse Workers in Detroit pledged $11,000 to help get it off the ground.[97] Neither the lack of organized support from the National Baptist Convention nor the failure to obtain NAACP endorsement could stop it from becoming the first Southern-born and -bred civil rights organization. This was due primarily to King's ability. With denominational auspices closed to him, King had sought out individuals, particularly pastors, who were emerging at the helm of local movements. Reflecting their personal trust in King, they organized themselves into a network of affiliates in locales across the South. By early spring 1957, a hallmark of King's leadership had become evident – the commitment to the transformation of relationships

94. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 86.
95. Bayard Rustin, 'Even in the Face of Death', in *Down the Line*, op. cit., p. 101.
96. Ibid., pp. 101, 103.
97. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 97.

rather than the use of threatening or intimidating words or behavior. If blacks could vote, he proclaimed, they would change the South: 'Give us the ballot and we will transform the salient misdeeds of bloodthirsty mobs into the calculated good deeds of orderly citizens.'[98]

Around the time of the start of SCLC, other professionals had come into King's circle. The educator Harris Wofford began writing letters to King when the bus boycott hit the front pages of the nation's newspapers in December 1955.[99] Along with his wife, Clare, Wofford had first visited Gandhi's home in Sevagram in 1949, one year after the Mahatma's death. In 1951, the Woffords had published *India Afire*, a book that interpreted the elements of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance. Scion of an established white family in East Tennessee – his father one generation removed from Mississippi, and his mother one generation removed from Little Rock, Arkansas – Wofford had done something unimaginable for his day. In 1954, he was one of the first whites to earn a law degree from Howard University, an institution established in the nineteenth century in Washington, D.C., for freed slaves and those who had been able to buy their way out of bondage. One year later, Wofford gave an address about Gandhi, portraying the Mahatma as a civil rights lawyer, at Hampton Institute, another mostly black educational institution, in Norfolk, Virginia, on 10 November 1955. The speech placed Gandhi's civil disobedience in the tradition of Western law, going back to 'when Socrates, refusing to obey the law not to speak freely but refusing to evade the law by escaping from Athens, drank the hemlock'. Referring to the 'twenty or thirty years of struggle and turmoil and suffering' that lay ahead in the fight to end discrimination, Wofford spoke as a lawyer when he told his audience, 'you cannot leave this problem to the lawyers alone'. The printed remarks somehow made their way to E. D. Nixon, who gave the speech to King.[100] Years later, Wofford described King as exemplifying 'the Gandhian alchemy' that, as in India and South Africa, 'made heroes out of common clay'.[101]

Wofford and King finally had a chance for a long discussion when the educator drove him from Baltimore, Maryland, to Washington, D.C., after a speech in which King criticized a black social fraternity for spending

98. King, 'Give Us the Ballot – We Will Transform the South', 17 May 1957, Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*, op. cit., p. 198.

99. Wofford was later a US senator from Pennsylvania and subsequently head of Americorps, the national volunteer-service corps agency in the Clinton administration.

100. Harris Wofford, 'Gandhi: The Civil Rights Lawyer', reprint of speech, Hampton Institute, Virginia, 10 November 1955, 12 pp.

101. Harris Wofford Jr, 'Non-Violence and the Law: The Law Needs Help', *Journal of Religious Thought,* Vol. 15 (Autumn–Winter 1957–58), as reprinted in Hugo Adam Bedau (ed.), *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 64; Wofford, interview with the author, Washington, D.C., 5 May 1995.

more money partying in a single weekend than did the NAACP, the country's leading civil rights litigant, in an entire year. Wofford was exhilarated by the daring of King's remarks, and King was intrigued by Wofford's account of Gandhi. The idea of a trip to India came up. In December 1956 – as King was preoccupying himself with Gandhi at the behest of Rustin, Smiley and Gregg – Wofford arranged for a grant from the Christopher Reynolds Foundation in New York. Libby Holman Reynolds, the chair of the foundation as well as a famous former torch singer, was 'fascinated with King'.[102] The small, private philanthropic foundation agreed to award $5,000 for a study tour in India, and King accepted an invitation from the Gandhi Memorial Foundation.[103] The experience would allow him to look through his own eyes upon *satyagraha* and hear firsthand how the British had been routed without violent overthrow.

Two months after the pledge was secured, King met another individual who would profoundly alter both his theoretical and tactical grasp of nonviolence. King accepted a speaking invitation at Oberlin College in Ohio, where he encountered a black Methodist minister named James M. Lawson Jr. At lunch with the Oberlin Student YMCA and its director, the Reverend Harvey Cox, his hosts, one of the guests sitting at King's small table was Lawson, who was then spending a year at Oberlin studying theology in preparation for the ministry. King learned that Lawson had been in federal prison for thirteen months for refusing to cooperate with US Government conscription during the Korean War. While Lawson was incarcerated, the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church successfully petitioned the court for Lawson to be appointed to them. The board assigned him to teach and coach at Hislop College in Nagpur, India. King was engrossed by Lawson's background and tenure in India, and he noted that they were both the same age, 28. Lawson told King that he had decided while in college that he would become a Methodist minister and go South to work to end segregation and racism. Already an ordained deacon, formal study at Oberlin was part of his plan. King blurted out, 'Don't wait! Come now! You're badly needed. We don't have anyone like you!' Lawson made the commitment to King, then and there.

To India

Accompanied by his wife Coretta and a close friend of the couple, Dr Lawrence D. Reddick, a black professor of history at Montgomery's Alabama State University, King left for India on 2 February 1959, scheduled to return

102. Wofford, interview with the author.

103. The grant went through the American Friends Service Committee; the Gandhi Peace Foundation issued its invitation through diplomatic channels. 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi', in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope,* op. cit., p. 24. Also see Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., p. 116.

on 10 March. Although they were guests of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and had come to study Gandhi, it was a two-way street, and thousands wanted to hear the legendary King speak. Coretta's training as a professional concert singer made her voice as compelling for song as his was for lectures. She often roused the crowds with spirituals and freedom songs. Pigmentation in one's skin was a positive factor in the subcontinent, King discovered: 'We were looked upon as brothers with the color of our skins . . . an asset.'[104] He reveled in the common bonds across the continents between minority and colonized peoples struggling to cast off racism or imperialism.

King's biggest surprise was that the action against the Montgomery bus system was well known in India. King concluded that the Indian news media had given a better sense of continuity to the 381-day boycott than had most American newspapers. The process of holding news conferences in New Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, and frequent interaction with inquisitive journalists, convinced him that the news media in India possessed an astonishingly accurate grasp of what was happening in the United States and other parts of the world.

The trip affected King in a number of lasting ways. His personal determination deepened. The *satyagrahis* that he met impressed him with their persistence. Some had spent a decade or more in prison, in contrast to his few days of incarceration. Four weeks of exposure to their mentality of a 'long march' intensified his resolve.[105] He became utterly persuaded that nonviolent resistance had been the best course for the Indian struggle, because he could find none of the aftermath or residue of bitterness and acrimony that would have resulted from a violent campaign for independence. Antagonism against the British was almost nonexistent, despite the duration of the colonial period, he observed. He concluded that nonviolent struggle is the only valid approach for major social and political change, because the other two options are so undesirable – acquiescence leads to suicide, while violence leaves the survivors embittered and the opponents scarred from the brutality that they had inflicted. His interaction with the colleagues and family of Gandhi ingrained for him the universality of nonviolent resistance. He discovered that it could work almost anywhere. The Gandhians, similarly, thought that King's successes in Montgomery proved the value of the technique for Western civilization and elsewhere. Together they agreed that, when carefully planned, it could work even under totalitarian regimes.[106]

Although struck by the extent and depth of poverty in India, King, Coretta and Reddick noticed the absence of crime and were surprised to see how little physical and verbal abuse took place between Indians – in

104. King, 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi', op. cit., p. 24.
105. Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., p. 116.
106. King, 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi', op. cit., p. 24.

comparison with the situation in the United States. The Indians might be poor, cramped and half-starved, King thought, but they did not displace their frustrations onto each other.[107] He was impressed by the fact that India had made greater progress on the scourge of untouchability than America had accomplished on the sins of racial segregation. Indian leaders from the top down had declared themselves to be morally opposed to the caste system, whereas American officials often were ambivalent or, worse, flamboyantly declared support for maintaining segregation. The threesome spoke admiringly of Indian efforts to promote self-sufficiency and of the country's democratic system, although King was concerned that even the most valiant and successful of efforts could not keep pace with India's population growth and its accompanying problems. He declared that the United States ought to help the Indian democracy, because it would boost the cause of nonaligned democracies worldwide.

The sit-ins and the freedom rides

The target of action in Montgomery had been highly specific and limited: one recalcitrant city's bus system. The phenomenal success suggested that other forms of direct action should be tried. Completely effective, lasting in results, the boycott left no residue of bitterness and offered hopes for the similar eradication of other immoral practices. Reinforced by reports of anticolonial movements in the Southern Hemisphere, and knowing that news of the protest had covered the globe, over the next four years students in black Southern colleges and universities – usually in total isolation from each other or in small groups of threes and fours – began to consider what steps they should take.

On 1 February 1960, after a long rambling discussion among themselves, four first-year students attending North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro arrived at their decision. Joseph McNeil and Ezell Blair, who were roommates, and their friends Franklin McCain and David Rich decided that they would sit at a 'whites only' lunch counter. They would ask to be served and would remain sitting if they were refused and, when asked to leave, they would stay. The action was called a 'sit-in'.

Although it was not known until after the Greensboro sit-ins started, groups of students had been preparing for such activity elsewhere in the South, and isolated individual protests had occurred. The Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, the first affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had, in the winter of 1958 and spring of 1959, undertaken a major nonviolent direct action campaign aimed at discrimination in downtown stores and restaurants. Extensive preparations had started,

107. Ibid., p. 27.

including workshops for students from several institutions in the city. Throughout the autumn of 1959, the Reverend James M. Lawson Jr led a weekly Monday-evening meeting in which he systematically opened up and analyzed with interested students the Gandhian theories and techniques that he had studied in India. As a byproduct of these workshops, several test cases were instituted, including small sit-ins for practice and role-playing.[108] These workshops lasted for several months before news broke of the Greensboro sit-ins. When Lawson received a phone call from North Carolina alerting him to what was happening in Greensboro, seventy-five Nashville students began the largest, most disciplined and influential of the sit-in campaigns in 1960.[109] In working with Lawson, often quiet and self-effacing, the Nashville students were being trained by one of King's mentors on nonviolence, they had the benefit of his direct knowledge of Gandhi's experiments, and were able to bring collective determination, discipline, skills and training to the unfolding drama.

The sit-ins represented a quintessentially pure Thoreauvian witness, based on a clear and simple belief that the laws of segregation were morally wrong. 'Unjust laws exist', said Thoreau, 'shall we transgress them at once?'[110] With the nation's attention on Greensboro, the sit-ins taking place in Nashville, Tennessee, Norfolk, Virginia, and Rock Hill, South Carolina, appeared to come together, as if in spontaneous combustion. They swept through the Southland, and thousands of students were reported to be moving into action.

The sit-ins gave the nonviolent movement its mass base and regional reach. Exactly as King and his advisers had hoped, the movement was becoming a mass phenomenon. Overnight, the sit-ins provided a method for individuals to engage in this climactic moral struggle and, as dozens upon dozens of bold, energetic and youthful leaders stepped forward, they demonstrated that both students and nonviolent direct action could be effective.

Within two months, 35,000 students had stood up against the laws of segregation by sitting down. As 1960 ended, 70,000 of them, mostly black, but increasingly joined by white students, had sat-in. Almost 4,000 had been arrested. A year later, hundreds of lunch counters had been desegregated in Kentucky and Maryland, which bordered the North, and the upper-Southern states such as Virginia and Tennessee, although conditions remained much the same in the Deep South states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina.

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108. Lawson, interview with the author.
109. Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 107.
110. Henry David Thoreau, 'Resistance to Civil Government', op. cit.

The sit-ins were important because they represented another plateau within the overall framework of nonviolence defined by Montgomery and King's leadership: the outright disobedience of illegitimate laws. Although sit-ins do not withhold patronage as in a boycott, they withdraw the reinforcement of a violent response that is expected by the attackers. The sit-ins withheld the one thing that would have reinforced the contemptible behavior of segregationists – the comfort of retaliation. The students, instead of striking back, were polite and showed courteous behavior toward those who refused to serve them or derided them. Burning cigarettes were ground into their arms and backs; tomato ketchup and mustard were poured into their hair and eyes; chewing gum was stuck in their hair; spittle and slurs flew. In huge numbers the students held firm. When asked to leave, they stayed. They were not being meek or mild. In purposely violating despicable business practices backed by law, they confused violent segregationists by their willingness to accept the consequences of their actions. When arrested, they did not resist. They were provoking jiu-jitsu – the catapulting of the onlookers' sympathies to their position.

As a result of the sit-ins, a second Southern civil rights organization came into being, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced *snick*). Just as Ella J. Baker had helped SCLC come into being in 1957, she did the same for SNCC three years later. The granddaughter of slaves and originally from Norfolk, Virginia, as stated earlier she had worked with the NAACP and lived in New York for many years. SNCC was entirely organized and run by young people – apart from having as senior advisers Baker, James Lawson and history professor Howard Zinn of Spelman College in Atlanta. It was formed as a result of a regional meeting of student sit-in leaders, the Southwide Student Leadership Conference, at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, 15–17 April 1960. Called by Baker, who was by then working with SCLC and had convinced King to allocate $800 for the meeting's costs, the keynote address for the conference was given by Lawson, and the benediction by King.[111]

The sit-in leaders decided to form their own coordinating committee and, over the next few weeks, a statement of purpose circulated across the Southern states in draft form. Lawson incorporated the recommended ideas and wrote the final version:

111. Lawson's militant appeal for an aggressive nonviolent struggle against racism was later interpreted by some as a bid to supplant King as spokesperson for the movement. Lawson rejects this outright. He recalls King as deferring to him on matters of nonviolent resistance and that they were both comfortable with the speaking arrangements in Raleigh. He also assails the notion that King wanted to submerge the student leaders under the SCLC, as a wing like the NAACP youth councils. 'Maybe some had this thought', Lawson recalls, 'but certainly not Martin – he and I both wanted the students to do whatever they wanted.' Lawson, interview with the author.

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the pre-supposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. . . . Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. . . . Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality. . . . Nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.[112]

The statement went out with the request to 'examine it closely', because 'each member of our movement must work diligently to understand the depths of *nonviolence*'. From this point, it became impossible to consider King and SCLC without seeing SNCC in the background, just as it was illogical to think of SNCC without taking into account SCLC.

Hard on the heels of the sit-ins came the 'freedom rides', which started on 4 May 1961. The strategy was initiated by CORE, a recapitulation of its 1947 'Journey of Reconciliation' co-sponsored with FOR and the War Resisters League. The participants on that journey had traveled through the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and West Virginia following a 1946 Supreme Court ruling that segregated seating on interstate lines was unconstitutional. In 1947, Bayard Rustin and George Houser, a white associate in FOR and executive secretary of CORE, participated in two weeks of trips to fifteen cities, during which tests of bus-company policies were made by the sixteen black and white men who participated. Their report shows a conspicuously Gandhian approach and uses the term *caste system* for American racist laws:

We cannot overemphasize the necessity for . . . courteous and intelligent conduct while breaking with the caste system. We believe that the reason the police behaved politely was that there was not the slightest provocation in the attitude of the resisters. On the contrary, we tried at all times to understand *their* attitude and position first.[113]

In 1961, CORE's national director, James Farmer, proposed that nonviolent riders challenge the failure of the US Government's executive branch to carry out the 1946 decision, as well as bring attention to a more recent 1960 Supreme Court ruling against segregated terminals. Just as in 1947, careful preparations were made, with Farmer enlisting an interracial group

112. James M. Lawson Jr, 'Statement of Purpose [dated 14 May 1960]', *The Student Voice*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (June 1960), p. 2 (published by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Atlanta).

113. Bayard Rustin and George Houser, 'We Challenged Jim Crow', a report prepared for the Congress of Racial Equality and Fellowship of Reconciliation, first published in *Fellowship*, April 1947, as cited in Rustin, *Down the Line*, op. cit., p. 24.

of thirteen men and women to meet in Washington, D.C., for one week's training. Specifically invoking Gandhi's Salt March of 1930, he argued that the prevalent method of handling arrests for the sit-ins by posting bond and being bailed out of jail was not sufficiently modeled on Gandhi:

> This was not quite Gandhian and not the best tactic. A better tactic would be to remain in jail and make the maintenance of segregation so expensive for the state and the city that they would hopefully come to the conclusion that they could no longer afford it. Fill up the jails, as Gandhi did in India, fill them to bursting. . . . Stay in without bail.[114]

Specifically imitating Gandhi's approach to Lord Irwin, when he wrote to advise the Viceroy of grievances that might prompt a Salt March, Farmer initially tried persuasion. He wrote to the Justice Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the president, and the Greyhound and Trailways bus companies alerting them that on 4 May, black and white freedom riders would defy the segregated practices of the buses: 'We would be nonviolent, absolutely nonviolent . . . and we would accept the consequences of our actions. This was a deliberate act of civil disobedience.'[115] There was no reply to any of his letters.

On the given date, the group boarded one Trailways and one Greyhound bus in Washington, D.C. Their route would take them down through Virginia and North Carolina through the mid-South, into South Carolina, and across the Deep South, heading for Jackson, Mississippi. They were 'putting the movement on wheels'.[116] When the first bus was burned by a white mob in Anniston, Alabama, on 14 May, everyone from James Farmer to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy sought to have the demonstrations halted because they considered them too dangerous. They had failed to reckon with the training and discipline of the Nashville movement.

John Lewis – thirty-five years later the deputy whip of the US House of Representatives – was growing up in rural Troy, Alabama, when he first heard King preaching on a black radio station before the Montgomery bus boycott. So moved was he by the sermon that he made a fundamental decision to get involved. During the autumn of 1959, while studying for the Baptist ministry in Nashville, he was one of the students who met every Monday night with James Lawson to learn Gandhian methods. The campus-and-community strategy committee in Nashville specifically selected Lewis to represent them on the freedom rides. The committee was comprised of the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, students from largely white Vanderbilt University, the historically black Fisk and Tennessee State

114. Farmer, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., p. 109.
115. Ibid., p. 110.
116. Ibid.

Universities, and the mainly black American Baptist Theological Seminary, where Lewis was a student.

When the bus in Alabama was burned and influential forces moved to cut short the rides, Diane Nash – a student at Fisk and the first woman to chair the strategy committee – telephoned Lawson at his mother's bedside in Ohio. 'We made a joint decision, as a collective, and we designated Diane to speak for us,' Lawson notes. 'It was a nonviolent ideological decision of the group. We were a unity (we didn't use the word consensus) and took as long as necessary to come together in decision making. John Lewis was our representative, and we would never have let him down.'[117] Famous for her indomitable spirit and stamina, Diane leaped into the fray over whether the rides should be discontinued, and spoke adamantly for the Nashville collective in opposition to stopping the rides. She was soon supported by others in SNCC, who insisted that the rides continue. The rides did resume, with some federal intervention.

On their arrival in Jackson, Lewis and everyone else were arrested. In a movement filled with fearless persons, Lewis stood out for his bravery. He spent two months in Mississippi's notorious Parchman Penitentiary, a throwback to eighteenth-century penal colonies. Soon after, John Lewis adopted King's oft-used phrase the 'beloved community' as the articulation of his goal. Among Lewis's jailmates was a white fellow freedom rider, Robert Filner, who three decades later would represent the Fiftieth District of California as a Democratic Party member of Congress. At the time, Filner's father was raising money for King and SCLC in the New York circle of Rustin and Levison.

The death knell for segregation statutes was sounded by the sit-ins. The 'freedom rides' were its dirge. Superficial aspects of statutory segregation in the South rapidly started to disintegrate. The sit-ins and rides also brought a new jolt of energy and dynamism into SCLC and emboldened King. It was a heady moment and, for the first time, a massive offensive against segregation seemed possible. The miraculous seemed thinkable. Novel ideas circulated, money started flowing again and, because of his steadily growing stature, King's inspiring words reached an even wider audience.

Just as the freedom rides were a more daring form of civil disobedience than the sit-ins, the reprisals against them by antagonists were carried out more flagrantly, too. Mobs shot out tires to stop the Greyhound bus in Anniston; white men brandished iron bars. Freedom riders were trapped aboard a burning vehicle and as the bus exploded, flying glass speared the riders. When hospitalized, physicians and nurses would not help them. When the Trailways bus reached Birmingham, white men with baseball bats and chains beat the freedom riders for fifteen minutes before police arrived.

117. Lawson, interview with the author.

King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, upon their return from Oslo, Norway, where he was awarded the 1964 Nobel Prize for Peace and called for nonviolent resistance on issues other than racial injustice. (Photo: Corbis-Bettmann/Herman Hiller, New York World Telegram & Sun Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

King during imprisonment in St Augustine, Florida, in June 1962. King was in prison more than a dozen times, the most noteworthy of which was in Birmingham, Alabama, from where he authored 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail', now studied around the world. (Photo: Corbis-Bettmann/UPI Telephoto, Martin Luther King Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

That Sunday was Mother's Day, or so claimed Birmingham's commissioner of public safety concerning his deliberate ploy to facilitate the rabble's access to the riders; he said his men must have been home with their mothers. Yet by remaining stalwart, disciplined and not retaliating, the freedom riders undermined their attackers; and when they persisted and stayed in the penitentiary without bailing out, they heightened the dilemma for their opponents. The reason that powerful national figures sought to end the rides was that the equanimity of the freedom riders in the face of vicious thugs was acutely upsetting to the national equilibrium. The aim of the freedom riders, as in the sit-ins, was to convert onlookers, based on a knowledge of balance and how to upset it. In this, they succeeded.

Civil rights, civil disobedience and civility

Gandhi had made the single most definitive contribution to developing civil disobedience as a method of political protest on a mass scale. Thoreau's concept of personal transgression of unjust laws gave Gandhi the English expression for it. The effectiveness of the sit-ins and freedom rides came from their courteousness in the face of obnoxious cruelty. Civility was synthesized with disobedience.[118] Mobs sought to malign the demonstrators. As a result, they degraded themselves.

Civil disobedience underwent a subtle change in the US context. In the classic use of the term, *civil disobedience* demonstrates deliberate defiance of laws, decrees or military orders that are regarded, by those ruled by them, as illegitimate, unethical or immoral. The disobedience may be aimed at a ruler or occupier who lacks moral or political authority. The fundamental idea is that human beings have an obligation to disobey ill-begotten human laws in deference to higher laws. Civil disobedience is normally resorted to when everything else has failed or where other remedies have been exhausted, when there is no choice, or a group is forced to decide where its higher loyalty resides. It is sometimes based on the belief that obedience would make one an accomplice to an immoral act. In the civil rights movement, its use rested on the belief that legal statutes that violated God's law should be resisted, or as SNCC adviser Howard Zinn justified its use, when 'man-made' legislation had violated 'natural' law. The movement's roots in the black churches gave rise to this mandate, and King reinforced it along with his professional advisers. Harkening to a law that was more significant than any piece of paper passed by the racist oligarchies of Southern county courthouses, loftier than the ravings of white-supremacist legislators declaiming in the state capitols, American blacks added a perspective to civil disobedience that grew out of their tribulations. They

118. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 2: *The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), p. 315.

believed that they should not heed laws that denied them rights as human beings. They considered their entitlement to be ordained by an unseen and higher order.

Even as his well-spoken articulations reached ever widening circles, King did not participate in either the sit-ins or the freedom rides. The only exception was an Atlanta sit-in, near the end of the phenomenon, on 19 October 1960. His abstention hurt his standing among the SNCC workers who – younger, unmarried, militant and living in the communities in which they worked – were ready to criticize him for languor, detachment or self-aggrandizement. While they carried toothbrushes in their pockets everywhere they went, in case of a sudden arrest, and prided themselves on their readiness to go to jail and stay there without bail, King avoided jail. His picture might have appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as 'man of the year' in February 1957 but, within the movement, his judgment was being questioned as well as his authority because of his avoiding the sit-ins and rides. Some of his caution derived from experiences in the tumult that had taught him to conserve his energy. King's colleagues stressed that he had to be judicious about being locked up or his symbolic acts would lose meaning. Some discouraged him from going to jail at all.

Associates of King's such as Ella Baker and Septima P. Clark were also critical of King's 'old-fashioned views of women'. Not only did they feel he was oblivious to their leadership potential but, additionally, in his dealings with women, they felt him condescending. In this sense, King was most unlike Gandhi, who had battled for much of his life on behalf of women's rights. Moreover, very few of King's ministerial peers were willing to share power with women. King's views reflected the prevailing outlook.

The civil rights movement shaped King as much as or more so than he shaped the movement. That he was criticized by women in the movement for the way he overlooked them implies that he was behind the times, but he was neither ahead of nor behind time. The same person who had not as a student been interested in organizing campus committees to fight Jim Crow was not eager to change patterns of sexual inequality. Rather, he was of his time. King was consistent, as shown in the fact that he was not the least bit iconoclastic in matters of the hearth, politics or dress. He was willing to engage in self-examination and be critical of himself in examining his weaknesses, even if his personal drive for improvement left him unadventurous about pushing back the boundaries of middle-class norms.

Whatever King's deficiencies, he was chosen as a leader; he was neither self-appointed nor self-aggrandizing. It is often assumed that sweeping movements require for their mobilization singular leaders who are born with mysterious authority, inspiration, peculiar magnetism and a vision ahead of their times. More often than not, however, popular movements create their own leaders to meet their peculiar needs. From the first meeting of ministers in Montgomery, where King had to be cajoled into leadership,

pressures were applied to shape him into a great leader. Yet even in acknowledging that King was a person of remarkable gifts and extraordinary talents, he should also be viewed through a lens in which popular mobilizations thrust leadership upon someone in their midst who would not otherwise have sought it.

An incident surrounding a telephone call to King's wife, Coretta, shows the double burden carried by King and shared with no one else in the movement: He was a leader inside the movement at the same time that, externally, he was its idealization. When King finally went to jail for his one sit-in at Rich's department store in Atlanta, he vowed to serve his time and not make bail. He also started to fast. As fifty-one of King's fellow protesters were released, King found himself, instead, hauled before a state judge for a prior offense.[119] Two months earlier, King had been sentenced to a year in jail ostensibly for driving in Georgia with Alabama automobile license tags, but more probably because he had been driving white author Lillian Smith in his car. Although the sentence had been suspended, King was placed on twelve months' probation. Due to his national prominence, following his arrest at the sit-in the same judge allotted him six months of hard labor (later reduced to four), and justified his ruling as based on King's having violated his probation. Before dawn on 26 October, police drove King – in handcuffs and leg irons – to Georgia's state prison in Reidsville, more than 200 miles away.

Coretta telephoned Harris Wofford, by then civil rights coordinator for Senator John F. Kennedy, a Democratic Party candidate for the presidency. Six months pregnant, Coretta told Wofford of her fear that her husband would be killed. Wofford was chagrined: 'King had been in jail four days and I, a friend and Kennedy's civil rights man, had done nothing.'[120] He went to work behind the scenes. He telephoned Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, and suggested that the senator directly telephone Coretta. Kennedy responded, 'That's a good idea. Why not?'[121] Since Wofford had already provided her number to Shriver, Kennedy's call went through immediately to Coretta. The candidate's brother Robert F. Kennedy, meanwhile, made a highly irregular but effective telephone call to the judge in which, according to Wofford, using colorful language he expressed his belief that all defendants had the right to make bond. The judge released King on $2,000 bond.

Wofford prepared a pamphlet describing Kennedy as the 'Candidate with a Heart', and filled it with quotations from Coretta, Daddy King, Ralph Abernathy and others mentioning Kennedy's phone call to King's

119. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 144.
120. Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., p. 14.
121. Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

worried spouse.[122] Historian Adam Fairclough notes, 'The Kennedy campaign milked this intervention for all it was worth, distributing millions of leaflets in black neighborhoods . . . thus, King inadvertently became a kingmaker.'[123] The words from Daddy King – nominally affiliated with the Republican Party, as were numerous blacks of his generation – particularly helped incline the black community, which, where it could vote, turned out for Kennedy. The telephone call marked the first time in a US national election that a conscious appeal was made for the votes of African-Americans as a power bloc. More than two-thirds of the ballots cast by blacks went for Kennedy, helping him to win several crucial states without which his narrow margin might have been lost.[124]

King's burden was thus also his opportunity. Arduous tasks were designated for him within the movement, yet additional demands also fell to him as a public leader that he alone was expected to meet. Much of the representational work and virtually all the fund-raising for SCLC had dropped onto King's shoulders. He bore the load of convincing African-Americans, including his own unmanageable denomination, that they not only had a right to defy unjust laws but an obligation. Many mature blacks felt economically vulnerable. They feared that their small possessions would be dissipated by jail, by giving bond and the likely loss of their job that would follow; the young did not stand to lose jobs or homes. To withhold one's money was one thing, they thought; physical intrusions were another.

As one of the twentieth century's greatest orators in the English language, it also fell to King to explain the increasingly complicated maneuvers of an expanding movement with many organizational actors. The strategies were growing more complex as the movement sought to break down increasing numbers of racist laws and practices. Furthermore, despite episodic efforts to straighten out chaotic management, install strong headquarters and tighten administration, it was fundamentally a decentralized movement. SCLC tried to help strengthen local movements mostly led by pastors, while SNCC organizers worked to help local leaders from diversified backgrounds step forward. In more ways than one, the movement was dispersed.

King also found himself incessantly arguing with liberals whose requirements seemed insatiable, many of whom were preoccupied with proving their cold war anticommunist credentials. Some wanted him to break all relationships with anyone who had ever had the slightest association with what was called the Old Left – the communists, socialists, pacifists, civil libertarians, labor organizers, church leaders, educators and others who

122. Ibid., p. 24.
123. Adam Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 59.
124. Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., p. 25.

particularly in the 1930s had worked for various reform movements. They feared that he, and they, would be tainted. Many opposed the use of civil disobedience and found it threatening for the order of a democracy. 'Those who assert rights under the Constitution and the laws . . . must abide by that Constitution and the law, if the Constitution is to survive,' wrote one New York lawyer. 'They cannot pick and choose; they cannot say that they will abide by those laws which they think are just and refuse to abide by those laws which they think are unjust. . . . The country, therefore, cannot accept Dr. King's doctrine . . . such doctrine is not only illegal . . . it is also immoral.'[125] King bore the brunt of addressing the controversial question of civil disobedience for those who thought it to be a dangerous and unwholesome development.

King's gifts as a communicator were such that, even as SCLC's organizational course twisted and turned, his words filled the airwaves and his pulpit enlarged until he was preaching to the entire country. Much as Gandhi had done from the time of his first petition in South Africa at age 25 until his pen was stilled by the assassin's bullet at age 79, King also understood the importance of publicity and information. The music of his voice and the studied biblical derivation of his words aroused a community already infused with a biblical ethos. He revived the bold reiterative use of the word *freedom*, which had resounded through the lyrics of the sorrow songs, stomps, antislavery calls and abolitionist documents. He was able to awaken the nobler instincts of whites across the country who became disgusted by the brutal reaction against the movement. He came on the scene in time for television to magnify his words. TV sets moved to the porch on a summer's night reached many families gathered around a single screen.

The proficiency shown in the Montgomery boycott, the breadth of the sit-ins and the cogency of the freedom rides were soon replaced by the realization that more complex tools would be needed to organize African-Americans to fight exclusion from political power. Solving the issues associated with full political participation in the life of the Union would require more intricate programs. Almost as soon as it had come into being, SCLC shifted its focus to voter registration. Having changed its mission, however, it seemed uncertain. By 1963 SNCC, too, had moved more than half of its efforts away from direct action and toward voter registration, as the network of young student activists turned themselves into seasoned political organizers. The personal stands taken in the sit-ins were being replaced by calibrated

125. Louis Waldman, 'Civil Rights – Yes: Civil Disobedience – No (A Reply to Dr. Martin Luther King)', *New York State Bar Journal*, Vol. 37 (August 1965), pp. 331–7, in Hugo Adam Bedau (ed.), *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 107.

campaigns for the ballot box, and thence by more complex endeavors to secure political representation. This would prove to be a longer, more complex process than anticipated, a procedure that continues still.

Not only was voter registration slower, less exciting and harder to report, but efforts to register voters erased any theoretical differences between the techniques of nonviolent direct action and the supposedly less confrontational approach implied by voter registration. The Kennedy administration had found the plodding efforts of voter registration less objectionable than the tempests of marches and demonstrations, as did many others. Yet exercising the right to vote in the most intransigent sections of the South provoked as much animosity as any form of direct action. Black citizens patiently queuing at a rural county courthouse to register to vote was as explosive as any procession in the cities. It soon became clear to King and everyone else that the Southern region would not be glowing with the bonfires of synchronized protests. Quietly and often on their own, municipalities moved in retreat from the inevitability of desegregation, and silently brought down the signs which divided the races. The leftover waiting rooms for 'colored' were without announcement either opened up to all or put to other purposes.

Letter from a Birmingham jail

One of the most important documents in the international literature of nonviolent resistance was written by Martin Luther King Jr in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. At the time, the industrial coal-and-steel city epitomized the worst that the 'culture' of the South had to offer, without any of the pride or pretense to gentility of more established antebellum cities such as Montgomery or Richmond. It had a history of violence. By the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan bragged that it had 20,000 members.[126] White police violence against black citizens was rampant, police officers were often in complicity with the Klan, and the white community of speculators and industrialists who settled there after the Civil War was heavily armed. A unionized metropolis unlike most of the South, Birmingham's labor-union organizing that resulted from aggressive campaigns in the 1930s was, by the 1950s and early 1960s, merely feeding recruits from white local union branches into the Klan and other vigilante groups. Birmingham's former police commissioner, Theophilus Eugene 'Bull' Connor, had come back from retirement in 1957 based on his pledge to maintain the city's rigid segregation ordinances and was elected to a position with the implausible

126. William Robert Snell, The Ku Klux Klan in Jefferson County, Alabama, 1916–1930 (Stanford University, 1967), p. 137 (M.A. dissertation), as cited in William A. Nunnelley, *Bull Connor* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama/London: University of Alabama Press, 1991), pp. 3, 187 note 12.

title of commissioner of public safety.[127] By the time of the freedom rides, he was in his sixth term of office. His selection as public safety commissioner meant neither civic mindedness nor safety for the city's blacks. Arresting whomever he pleased, he tapped the telephones of civil rights groups, had *agents provocateurs* galore, spied on meetings, trumped up charges – all without compunction or condemnation. Birmingham's notoriety as a result of racial violence led some whites to put a new city charter before the voters that eliminated the job of so-called public-safety commissioner. While still public safety commissioner, Connor declared himself a candidate for mayor.

SCLC had a good base in Birmingham. The Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth, one of King's more spirited associates, shepherded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, the local affiliate of SCLC. Almost singlehandedly, he had kept alive black opposition to industrial suppression and police brutality. Plans were drawn up for a campaign in Birmingham. The Reverend Wyatt T. Walker, a Petersburg, Virginia, pastor brought to SCLC in 1960 to lift some of the administrative burdens from King, was assigned to sketch a blueprint for a city-wide protest. A team was assembled. Andrew Young, at a later time the American ambassador to the United Nations, already known for his spirit of reconciliation and negotiation skills in his early thirties, came to town. James Bevel, a mercurial organizer with a fiery temper, was part of the group; he had been a participant in James Lawson's original Nashville workshops. Lawson himself was traveling in and out of Birmingham to run more seminars, having become director of nonviolent education for SCLC, a largely volunteer position, in 1960. Dorothy Cotton had come with Walker to SCLC from Petersburg and was also working on training. The crew was complete and a strategy was fixed.

The objective in Birmingham was to desegregate the restaurants in downtown department stores. Black families shopping for children's school clothing, Easter outfits or Christmas gifts were unable to be served lunch in the stores they patronized. SCLC's idea was to use demonstrations – backed by a boycott of the downtown shopping area – to force the city's business executives to the negotiating table. In this way, King and SCLC believed, they could bypass an unbending city government and sit with executives who might be receptive because of the dollars involved. A second goal was to involve the federal government, because it had been learned during the freedom rides that whatever intervention could be achieved from Washington would facilitate the process.

The plans drawn up for Birmingham called for small marches because it was known that Bull Connor preferred the police to take people in before a demonstration built momentum. The planned demonstrations were thus

127. Nunnelley, *Bull Connor*, op. cit., pp. 9, 73, 74.

intended to be deceptively minute, to evade interruption and to ration emotional resources. In one instant, all routes into the city could be closed off by the police and arrests would be immediate. The strategy relied heavily on the news media but required dexterity. Reportage by journalists would curtail Connor's excesses, but if he did not display his customary ruthlessness, the news corps would have nothing about which to report.

The plan was rife with potential problems. Many middle-class blacks thought Shuttlesworth's pluck was nothing more than impetuosity and that King was an outsider. All plans were discussed in secret to prevent Connor's electronic ears from recording the sessions. This meant that badly needed advance alerts could not be spread through the churches. Although a moderate candidate had won more votes than Connor in the mayoral election, SCLC had to delay everything until a runoff election had taken place to secure the required majority for the moderate.

SCLC continually postponed Lawson's workshops because it did not want to upset the effort by moderates to take over city government. In suspending Lawson's workshops, however, a deficit developed. Knowledge and practice of nonviolent direct action were lacking in the heavily armed community. Even in a steel town of an agrarian region, most blacks had emigrated from isolated farmhouses where, far from neighbors, they possessed guns. They might leave them at home to show respect for the movement's policy of nonviolence or try to please the civil rights workers, whom they admired, but they did not discard their firearms. If civil rights workers were present, the guns were put away or tucked under the seats of pickup trucks. Sometimes, unbeknownst to the staff, local black youths would guard with guns the civil rights workers who came from out of state, sleeping under porches or on rooftops with rifles. (I later discovered that more than once I had been so guarded.) Cancellation of Lawson's workshops meant that there was little agreement in Birmingham, at the grass roots, about the superiority of nonviolent methods.

The full nature of the predicament was disclosed when the protests finally started on 3 April 1963. Few people turned out. King was surprised by the black opposition to demonstrations. The secret planning sessions had come back to haunt the team, as resentment bristled from those who felt they should have been consulted. Bull Connor's men, who had been unable to find the perpetrators of scores of unsolved bombings in the city, now surprised everyone. They restrained themselves from their customarily hateful behavior. Many other difficulties complicated the picture: a court injunction was issued against demonstrations, Daddy King beseeched his son not to put himself on the line, and the bail fund was exhausted.

After announcing that he would lead a demonstration on 12 April and yield to arrest, King was informed by the bondsman who had been furnishing bail that he could no longer continue to do so. With twenty-four SCLC staff and advisers gathered around him in a hotel room, King

saw hopelessness on every face. Three hundred people were in jail. One person spoke the words on everyone's mind: 'Martin . . . this means you can't go to jail. We need money. We need a lot of money. We need it now. You are the only one who has the contacts to get it. If you go to jail, we are lost. The battle of Birmingham is lost.'[128]

King retired to a small room. Twenty-four advisers and staff waited for his decision. Would he demonstrate and go to jail? Andrew Young, Dorothy Cotton, James Bevel, Bernard Lee and the others mingled, fretting. The plan might expire. When King rejoined the staff, he was wearing blue-denim jeans and a chambray work shirt. This signaled that he was ready to go to jail. 'I don't know what will happen; I don't know where the money will come from. But I have to make a faith act,' he said.[129] So he did. He was allowed to walk perhaps one-third of a mile, singing as he went, when Bull Connor ordered his officers to arrest him. For twenty-four hours, he was held incommunicado, in solitary confinement, in a cell with no light. Later, he described the time as 'the longest, most frustrating and bewildering hours I have lived'.[130]

As he languished in his cell, he read in a local newspaper an open letter signed by eight of Alabama's leading clergy, including four bishops and one rabbi. It castigated the demonstrations as fomenting violence and hatred, applauded the police, appealed for negotiations with local representatives instead of outsiders and implored blacks to avoid King's campaign. King was infuriated. He started scrawling on the margins of the very newspaper in which the statement appeared – the only thing in the cell on which to write – and continued on fragments of paper provided by a friendly convict who had been granted special privileges by the guards. Eventually, his attorneys were able to bring him a pad of writing paper.

His response contained a methodical analysis of civil disobedience. He observed that 'freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor: it must be demanded by the oppressed'.[131] Blacks, he wrote, had waited more than 340 years for constitutional and 'God-given rights'.[132] He spoke with Thoreauvian clarity to the anxiety expressed by his fellow clergy over the willingness to break laws:

> There are two types of laws: there are *just* laws and there are *unjust* laws. . . . What is the difference between the two? . . . A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. . . . Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn't

128. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Why We Can't Wait', in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope,* op. cit., p. 543.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid., p. 544.
131. King, 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail', op. cit., p. 257.
132. Ibid.

segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? . . . Obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court because it is morally right . . . disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong.[133]

King placed civil disobedience in the biblical tradition of Hebrew resistance by the exiled Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego against Nebuchadnezzar in ancient Babylon and in the context of the early Christians with their violation of the edicts of the Roman emperors.

Everything that Hitler did was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal'. It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers [and sisters] even though it was illegal. If I lived in a communist country . . . I would advocate disobeying . . . anti-religious laws.[134]

Enunciating many of the themes that had characterized his leadership and would remain constant throughout his shortened life, in writing to the Alabama religious leaders King did not mention Gandhi or Thoreau but, rather, invoked the patriarchal figures, thinkers and images that would resonate with seminary-trained male clerics. He associated himself with Saint Paul, an 'extremist', spoke of Jesus as an 'extremist in love', and asked if Thomas Jefferson were not an extremist when he wrote of holding truths to be self-evident that all are created equal.[135] He cited Martin Buber, a theologian and philosopher of Judaism. He commended one of the pastors to whom he was writing because he had welcomed blacks to his church the previous Sunday, and he saluted Roman Catholics who had invited black students to study at a college in Mobile some years earlier. Yet he wrote with disappointment of dashed hopes in Montgomery when white ministers, priests and rabbis refused to serve as a route through which their grievances could be placed before the power structure and deliberately misrepresented the boycott's leaders or openly opposed them.

He acknowledged that the marches had been intended to lay bare tensions:

We had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. . . . You may well ask, 'Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?' You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community

133. Ibid., pp. 258, 259.
134. Ibid., pp. 259, 260.
135. Ibid., p. 262.

that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. . . . I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, and there is a type of constructive tension that is necessary for growth.[136]

Regarding any compliments to the police for keeping calm, King said their reserve had been tactical, merely to preserve segregation.

Years of oppression had drained African-Americans of self-respect, he penned; blacks were smothering in cages of poverty while affluence surrounded them. He presented himself as being in the center of a long spectrum of options in the black community:

The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation [the black-Muslim movement]. . . . This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity. . . . I have tried to stand between these two forces saying that we do not need to follow the 'do-nothingism' of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist.[137]

Returning to the question of civil disobedience before he closed his letter, he held up the example of the sit-ins as he had so often in the past:

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. . . . When these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage.[138]

He closed by offering the hope that the 'deep fog of misunderstanding' would be lifted from black 'fear-drenched communities' and in 'some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood' would shine in 'scintillating beauty'.[139]

Although the epistle from the Birmingham jail seemed to have no effect locally, it became the single most stellar document produced from a movement in which tens of thousands participated. It is the most splendid and elucidating prose that King ever wrote. Decades later, it is studied all over the world by those interested in nonviolent struggle.

136. Ibid., p. 256.
137. Ibid., p. 261.
138. Ibid., p. 266.
139. Ibid., p. 267.

The children's crusade

Once King was out of jail, James Bevel suggested that since the parents of schoolchildren were fearful of losing their jobs, their children should march. King liked the idea and let Bevel know that he approved of it. Not everyone felt this way, however; it was a controversial idea within the ranks. Bevel, who had by then married Diane Nash, called Lawson who encouraged the strategy of children's marches:

> We [in Nashville] had a kinship with the notion that high school students made good nonviolent warriors – this was one of my teachings always – in nonviolent direct action, you could multiply your numbers because children and young people and women could be just as good and, often times, better [than men]. We're not limited by some kind of sexual role model in this business . . . as I constantly pressed. . . . The faculty and presidents [of the local colleges] wanted nothing to do with the movement. But it was clear that the high school people, and their younger sisters and brothers, were fertile soil for the freedom movement.[140]

Bevel waited for most of the SCLC staff to leave the city for a meeting, taking their opposition with them. He and others went into the schools and started organizing the young. Having learned from Lawson about Gandhi's 1930 Salt March and the 60,000 Indians imprisoned after the procession to the sea, he fashioned a rallying cry: 'Gandhi said to fill the jails! We're gonna fill the jails!' On 2 May 1963, thousands of black children left their classrooms and headed for the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Emerging from the church in groups of fifty, they sang, clapped, laughed and chanted in syncopated ragtime renditions of freedom songs as they proceeded into the arms of police waiting with paddy wagons. Of the thousand people arrested, 319 were children, some of whom were ironically transported to jail in school buses.[141] Five days later, more than 2,000 persons, including children, were incarcerated as Wyatt T. Walker, James Bevel and others coordinated across the city with walkie-talkies instead of the tapped telephones. The jails were jammed.

Bull Connor became enraged. Furious at the crowds of parents and other black observers who gathered the next day to watch as the kids were hauled into custody, he sent for six German shepherd police dogs, ostensibly to keep the observers in line. As the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church disgorged more youthful demonstrators singing freedom songs straight into his barricade, he ordered the dogs deployed. The appearance of snarling dogs reminded the black community of the patrols that had roamed the roads during slavery. The demonstrators gathered in Kelly Ingram Park, a leafy line of demarcation dividing black Birmingham from white Birmingham. A number of them were bitten by the dogs. They reacted with a barrage

140. Lawson, interview with the author.

141. *Birmingham News*, 3 May 1963, in Nunnelley, *Bull Connor*, op. cit., p. 147.

of sticks, stones, bricks and bottles that sailed through the air toward the police and the dogs.[142] Connor ordered the fire department to turn on their high-pressure water hoses to disperse the crowds. With force strong enough to tear clothing off bodies, enucleate eyeballs, lacerate skin and break bones, the firemen drove the people from the park. Television reports gave electrifying details of the dogs and fire hoses, wailing sirens, terrified children and parents; the news media went wild. Broadcasts were beamed worldwide. Four churches were barely enough to hold the nightly mass meetings held in response to Connor's actions. From college presidents to janitors, the black community suddenly congealed into one unified mass, unleashing 'the biggest wave of black militancy since Reconstruction'.[143]

Embarrassed, the Justice Department responded. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy dispatched a top official, Burke Marshall, to the city to act as an intermediary. On 10 May, King and Shuttlesworth announced that Birmingham's white business executives had agreed to a desegregation plan. That night King's motel was bombed; largely untrained in nonviolent struggle, the black community then went on a rampage until dawn. Marshall and the Kennedys began drafting legislation that would, the following year, be passed as the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

On 11 June, President John F. Kennedy gave a televised speech on the immorality of segregation and made it clear that segregation would not stand as the law of the land. Within a few hours of the president's historic oration, in Jackson, Mississippi, a leader of the NAACP, Medgar Evers, was shot to death. On 15 September 1963, four small girls died in a bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. A progressive white lawyer in the city, Charles Morgan, cracked the veneer of the industrial city's élite when speaking at a men's business club. He said the blood of the innocents covered the hands of every white citizen who had remained silent in the face of racial hatred: 'Four little girls were killed in Birmingham yesterday. A mad, remorseful, worried community asks, "Who did it? . . . Who is really guilty?" Each of us. . . . Every person in this community who has in any way contributed to the popularity of hatred.'[144] Silence, he said, was the same as throwing the bomb. As a result, his law practice was finished, his wife and child's safety threatened, and one year later, he had been driven out of Birmingham.

As fears rose of increased bombings and assassinations, the idea of a March on Washington, proposed in the 1940s by A. Philip Randolph, reasserted itself. On 28 August 1963, a quarter of a million people of all backgrounds came to Washington by car, bicycle, motorscooter, on foot and

142. Ibid., p. 148.
143. Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, op. cit., p. 82.
144. Charles Morgan, interview, in Raines (ed.), *My Soul Is Rested*, op. cit., pp. 182, 183.

in 1,514 buses and 39 trains.[145] Although SNCC was angered that in his speech to the people John Lewis, by now its chair, was forced to soften his criticism of the government's timidity, King seized the moment and found the tools to unite the country as never before. His speech summoned imagination. He spoke of reconciliation to a country sundered by race and brilliantly offered a vision for the future: 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.' Without erring by overstatement, he invoked an image of a second Emancipation Proclamation as he stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial and made his peroration, inspired by words that harkened back to the end of slavery: 'Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.'

Whether the march represented pressure on federal authorities, who were not doing enough, or support for the administration's civil rights legislation, it was a milestone for King and the nation. While Montgomery in 1955 and 1956 had given him national prominence, the events associated with Birmingham in 1963 – the children's crusade and his speech in Washington – not only made King the country's leading civil rights advocate, they made him the moral leader of the country.

The Selma march

The last major surge of nonviolent direct action by the Southern movement was the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. After this event, the movement would turn almost exclusively to tools of political and economic organizing, including mock ballots and development of alternative political parties and social institutions – among the most advanced methods of nonviolent struggle. As early as the Montgomery bus boycott, King had adopted Gandhi's term *constructive program* as he forecast such a priority: 'The constructive program ahead must include a campaign to get Negroes to register and vote.'[146] By 1964, SNCC was recruiting 1,000 young, mostly white students, religious leaders and lawyers to serve as volunteers in Freedom Schools and voter-registration programs in the state of Mississippi. It was to be a calculated and massive assault on the most bitter Deep South stronghold of what Niebuhr might have considered collective evil. On 21 June, officers of the law in Neshoba County, Mississippi, murdered three civil rights workers – two young white men from New York and a local black youth. When the chief law officers, including the deputy sheriff, were arrested for the heinous crime six months later, they were charged with denial of the nonviolent workers' civil rights under federal statutes, rather than the crime of murder, which would be adjudicated at the state level.

145. *Washington Post*, as cited in Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Account of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1987), p. 183.

146. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 222.

King, who normally exercised enormous restraint of any criticism of the federal government and always sought to appeal to Washington in the most positive vein, spoke pointedly about the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He gave voice to widespread consternation in the movement, where FBI agents were known to stand aloof, taking notes while police beat and harassed local people and civil rights workers. The agents, many of them white Southerners, were suspected of having personal friendships within the local terror organizations. Not only was the FBI not on the side of justice, the full extent of its intrusions and attempts to corrupt the movement may never be fully disclosed.[147]

King's criticism irritated the director of the bureau, J. Edgar Hoover, who took it upon himself to mount an exhaustive campaign, a 'secret war', Harris Wofford called it, to demolish King's reputation.[148] Hoover had held the same job for forty years and had ruined the careers and lives of many prominent Americans, as he manipulated the power of the FBI and fear of communism. He called King a demagogue and 'the most notorious liar in the country'.[149] Referring to Stanley Levison, Hoover cautioned Attorney General Kennedy that a major communist figure had penetrated King's inner cabinet. The hysteria of 1950s cold war anticommunism had not yet abated, and politicians could still be ruined by hints that they were not wary about 'threats to internal security'. The verdict of the FBI was naïvely accepted as truth by some government officials, and others were fooled. The 'initiative' behind the FBI wiretap on King's telephones was 'almost wholly Robert Kennedy's', contends historian David J. Garrow.[150] Wofford believes that wiretaps on King began in 1957, because of King's relationship with Levison. When Wofford was shown his own file from the FBI, the result of the bureau's work on his security clearance, it had phone calls to Levison in 1957 made from King's number; therefore, by deduction, according to Wofford, the bureau must have been tapping King. Indeed, Wofford *suspects* that surveillance had begun when King first emerged as a leader in the Montgomery bus boycott, in 1956.[151] The attorney general urged King

147. For a credible, firsthand account of the complicated story of the FBI's disruptions and the ambiguities involving the Kennedy administration, see Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., pp. 201–39.

148. Ibid., p. 227.

149. 'Hoover Assails Warren Findings', *New York Times*, 19 November 1964, p. 1, as cited in Neil J. Welch and David W. Marston, *Inside Hoover's FBI: The Top Field Chief Reports* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), pp. 108, 301 note 38.

150. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.,* op. cit., pp. 60–62.

151. 'I am not sure that the verdict of the FBI was naïvely accepted by the entire government. I told Martin Luther King that in my own personal experience, on almost every fact being cleared by the FBI for the White House, they had the facts upside down.' Wofford, interview with the author, 28 May 1996. Also see Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings*, op. cit., p. 214.

to sever relations with Levison. President John F. Kennedy walked with King in the Rose Garden of the White House to echo the advice.

King was grappling with these two separate but related efforts to vitiate his strength – FBI defamation and pressure to repudiate intimate friends – as he tried to move the movement to its next stage which, according to plans, was Selma, Alabama. So grim was the quandary that joking about it seemed the best solution. Ralph Abernathy found a microphone in one pulpit, probably of innocent origins, and pulled the 'doohickey' up before the congregation. He spoke into it, pretending to direct a tirade at Hoover and the FBI. From then on, the 'doohickey' in the pulpit became a prop for preachers in SCLC, and provoked gales of laughter in mass meetings.

There was less laughter for King. When the news was reported on 14 October that he would receive the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, King had been hospitalized at St Joseph's Infirmary, in Atlanta, for exhaustion and a viral infection – the probable cost exacted by the surveillance efforts and pressure of knowing that Kennedy had formally approved the FBI wiretaps.[152] It was there that he learned that he was to go to Norway, on 10 December, to receive the prize. His remarks in Oslo connected the nonviolent struggle of the American civil rights movement with the entire planet's need for disarmament. He mentioned that the most outstanding characteristic of the American movement was the direct involvement of masses of people in the protest. While emphasizing Gandhi's introduction of the '[nonviolent] weapons of truth, soul force, noninjury and courage', King's comments also represented his strongest call to date for the use of nonviolent resistance on issues other than racial injustice. He suggested that international nonviolent action could be used to let global leaders know that, beyond racial and economic justice, individuals all over the world were concerned about world peace: 'I venture to suggest [above all] . . . that . . . nonviolence become immediately a subject for study and for serious experimentation in every field of human conflict, by no means excluding relations between nations . . . which [ultimately] make war.'[153] After telling reporters that he was donating the prize money to the movement, he returned home to take up the plans for the Selma campaign once again.

A slave market before the Civil War, Selma had at one time been a military depot for the Confederacy. The Old South river town was the birthplace of the Alabama White Citizens' Council – a white supremacist pressure group, which, although more discreet than the Ku Klux Klan, shared its objectives. Located in Dallas County, in the Black Belt, whites

152. Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta* (New York: Lisa Drew/Scribner, 1996), pp. 334–5.

153. Martin Luther King Jr, 'The Quest for Peace and Justice', in Frederick Haberman (ed.), *Nobel Lectures, Peace, 1951–1970* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1972), Vol. 3, pp. 338–43 (address of 11 December, upon receiving the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize).

constituted less than half the populace but nearly all the registered voters. Adjacent Wilcox County's population was 78 percent black, not one of whom could vote. SCLC thought Selma, fifty miles due west of Montgomery, to be ideal for a nonviolent campaign concerning voter rights. A major deficiency in the 1964 federal civil rights legislation had been the failure to authorize the use of federal registrars to aid disfranchised Southern blacks who were subjected to gross intimidation when they tried to register. SNCC had, in 1963, sent half a dozen field workers into the city and surrounding counties, including one white organizer who went clandestinely into the white community, so efforts to organize a voter-registration campaign were already underway. It was thought that this might create a problem with competition between the two organizations – a factor where private fund-raising was involved – but King thought he could overcome any strains.

Selma's sheriff, Jim Clark, was brazen in his racist mutterings and had a deputized posse that knew no limits. The posse would sometimes surround black churches during mass meetings. State troopers had used electric cattle prods against potential voter registrants, and the shock-producing prods had been pressed up under the dresses of young women.[154]

The protests began with orderly queues of would-be voters outside the courthouse. King felt that the time had come for him to go back to jail to publicize the voting issue. On the fifth anniversary of the start of the sit-ins, 1 February 1965, he and 250 demonstrators were arrested. With the new Nobel laureate locked up, a thousand people protested. President Lyndon Baines Johnson announced that he would ensure that the right to vote applied to all citizens. Protests in nearby counties intensified the pressure; night marches began to be staged. In one, the sheriff and his men used nightsticks to drive 165 demonstrators into a rural area in a forced march at a runner's pace.[155] Before long, 3,000 people were in jail in Dallas County. In another night march, a state trooper shot and killed 25-year-old Jimmy Lee Jackson, a black pulpwood cutter who was trying to help his grandfather and mother, who had been clubbed. After Jackson's death, King approved a plan for a grand fifty-four-mile march from Selma to Montgomery. James Bevel announced the date of 7 March for the assemblage.

The Selma march showed the difficulties of drawing neat and precise lines around techniques of nonviolent struggle. Some argued that if voter registration was the goal, SNCC had the best approach through its community organizing and efforts to identify and nourish new leadership. Others thought direct action could complement the drive for political rights, and thought SCLC to be more adept at large eye-catching demonstrations. Of course, both organizations did some of each. There being no right or

154. Mary King, *Freedom Song*, op. cit., p. 416.
155. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 388.

wrong for such a division of opinion, it was left up to individuals to decide whether they would participate. King flew to Washington to meet with President Lyndon B. Johnson, and proceeded to Atlanta to prepare himself to lead the Selma march. Accumulated pressures were taking their toll on King, with a combination of death threats, depression and fatigue. Not surprisingly, Alabama governor George C. Wallace was doing his best to thwart the plans, as county officials reported threatened shootings or explosions. As confusion set in, the civil rights workers' choices boiled down either to seeking a judge's ruling that permitted their passage or proceeding until they could go no further. On Sunday morning, 7 March, the appointed day, King stayed in Atlanta to preach at Ebenezer Baptist Church. As 500 community people collected at Brown Chapel, primed to march, Abernathy telephoned King. King reluctantly said to go ahead without him, for which he was subsequently roundly criticized. SCLC's Hosea Williams drew the straw to lead the march, and John Lewis said he would walk beside him.

Five hundred protesters moved out from Brown Chapel, east toward the state capitol. As the crowd reached the crest of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, arching high over the Alabama River, they found that blue-uniformed state troopers had spread themselves across four lanes, about 300 yards ahead. Sheriff Jim Clark's deputies flanked them, mounted on horseback and wearing gas masks and helmets. Selma mayor John Cloud shouted into a bullhorn for the throng to disperse. When the protesters remained in place, as they had planned, police waded into the front lines with billy clubs. John Lewis collapsed from a blow to his head, his skull fractured. People fell unconscious. The troopers regrouped and attacked again, canisters of tear gas were lobbed. The posse rode out from behind buildings and whipped demonstrators with rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire and bullwhips. When word of 'Bloody Sunday' and John Lewis's hospitalization hit the news, any ambivalence over the choice of strategies evaporated as the movement's earlier spirit of direct action was rekindled and burst into fervor. From all over the South, carloads of demonstrators moved onto highways, heading toward Selma. As with the freedom rides, once again, it was SNCC that pressed for continuation of the march.

A call was announced for a second march on Tuesday, 9 March. The news coverage of the law officers' violence meant that the appeal was heard nationally. Lawyers for the movement went to work seeking a federal court injunction against interference with the second attempt. King had returned to Selma on Monday night, only to learn that Federal District Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr would not be willing to issue such an order until a hearing could be instituted later in the week. The justice wanted the march postponed. King deliberated. He disliked personal confrontation and infighting. Invariably, he could see that there were two sides to any issue and found it hard to reject one group's position. He did not want to defy a federal judge and had never done so. Nor did he wish to reject the

similar request of Assistant Attorney General John Doar. Yet he realized that SNCC would continue the trek, no matter the consequences, even if a judge asked that it be called off. A deal was proposed by a mediator sent by President Johnson, former Florida governor LeRoy Collins, that the marchers would cross the bridge on Tuesday, as proclaimed, and turn back upon their arrival at a police barricade, rather than proceeding to Montgomery. This was meant to save face on both sides. From New York, Bayard Rustin told King he had no choice but to persist.[156] Convinced that the expectations of thousands would otherwise be betrayed, King told everyone to put on their walking shoes.

The line meandered out of Brown Chapel on Tuesday, 9 March. A federal marshal advised that Judge Johnson had forbidden a march. King listened politely and then proceeded toward the waiting police. Within fifty yards of the blockade, he brought the crowd of 2,000 to a halt and called for prayer. The strains of 'We Shall Overcome' filled the air. The old spiritual, a mainstay of black Protestant churches in the nineteenth century, had become the movement's signature anthem after it was sung at the 1960 Raleigh meeting of student sit-in leaders that formed SNCC. King turned back toward the Edmund Pettus Bridge. As the column swung around, the line of state troopers blocking the way suddenly parted and withdrew to the sides of the road. Some named it the 'Tuesday turnaround'.

Shortly after, the Reverend James J. Reeb, a white minister newly arrived from Massachusetts with other clergy to march, was attacked and received a blow to the head. On Thursday, 12 March, King testified at Judge Johnson's hearing. The following day, Governor Wallace met with President Johnson, who upbraided Wallace as wrong, told him that a basic right was being denied, and said that his state troopers should be protecting, not attacking, the demonstrators.[157] Solidarity demonstrations broke out in many cities; more than 1,000 picketed in front of the White House demanding more action. President Johnson announced that he was preparing legislation for a voting-rights bill. Selma's second death occurred as Reeb slipped from life. The outpouring of reaction to the death of a white pastor contrasted with that at the passing of Jimmy Lee Jackson, who was black. Jackson's had gone all but unnoticed nationally.

President Johnson went on television on Sunday, 15 March, in a special message to the Congress that was watched by 70 million viewers. He declared that the protests and violent reactions had stemmed from the country's history of black disfranchisement. 'It is wrong – deadly wrong – to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country,' he declared, asking for rapid approval of the administration's new bill. Outside

156. Ibid., p. 403.
157. Ibid., p. 407.

the capitol, he charged, alluding to public sentiment, is the 'outraged conscience of a nation'. When the president pronounced the words 'we shall overcome', tears came to the eyes of Martin Luther King Jr, for the first time, to anyone's recollection in the movement.[158]

Judge Johnson ruled in favor of SCLC's march proposal. On Sunday, 21 March, the third attempt and major five-day cavalcade to Montgomery would begin. The president signed an order placing nearly 2,000 members of the Alabama National Guard into federal service and put Deputy Attorney General Ramsey Clark in charge. Two weeks after the original attempt, the robust singing of freedom songs kept energies high as 3,000 people streamed out on foot, filing across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Members of Congress boarded planes, entertainers flew from Hollywood and New York, and religious leaders arrived from across the country. Seven miles were covered the first day under tight security. With some on bedrolls where they stopped, and others bused back to Selma, the night passed quietly and breakfast came by truck from Selma in the morning. The next day, Monday, the marchers tallied eleven miles. King walked the first three days, although some noticed fatigue and a seeming detachment. On Wednesday, with blistered feet, he flew to Cleveland, Ohio, to raise money, saying he would be back in time for Thursday's final leg into Montgomery. On Thursday morning, 25 March, numbers swelling by the thousands, a fatigued King led the multitude into the center of the city, walking up Dexter Avenue.

A crowd estimated at 25,000 had massed itself around the steps of the state capitol. King looked across to the Dexter Avenue church that had held such meaning for him, and that he had left only five years earlier. Much had changed. His speech was resounding: A 'season of suffering' still awaited, but the nation could still win a 'society at peace with itself . . . that can live with its conscience'.[159] As he flew back to Atlanta, however, he learned that a white woman volunteer who had come to support the effort, Viola Gregg Liuzzo, had been shot to death by Ku Klux Klan night-riders as she drove a colleague back to Selma. (It was later revealed that one of the klansmen was an FBI informant.) King felt dejected, emotionally wounded over her killing. It diminished his gratification that Selma had brought the country together into a concerted push for the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and that an alliance had worked together.

'Fire that no water could put out'

At the beginning of the decade, the Montgomery bus boycott had been celebrated for its flawless use of a potent nonviolent sanction. By the end of the decade, as frustrations accumulated, Black Power, Black Panther and

158. Ibid., p. 408.
159. Ibid., p. 413.

Black Muslim adherents in the African-American community began using vocabularies with violent shadings and tones of retaliation. As often happens with nonviolent struggle, a spectrum stretched from almost pure nonviolent action to forebodings of carnage. Popular movements are never pure archetypes, never static, and are always changing. Hopelessness and disappointment settled in after the unsuccessful challenge to the seating of the regular all-white delegation from Mississippi at the Democratic National Convention in 1964. The glory days of the movement receded with the realization that more black children were being taught in segregated classrooms than was the case when the high court had made its historic ruling in 1954; ghettoes in the cities were more desperate than ever; unemployment of black youths and adults was increasing rather than decreasing. It was at this moment that the tendency in the black community that calls for a separate existence apart from whites reasserted itself and, by 1966, 'there appeared the expected apostles of withdrawal and separatism to complete the classical cycle'.[160]

In his last years, King became persuaded that powerlessness, poverty and freedom from want were the fitting targets for his attention. This is also the time when he wrote that the movement's most powerful nonviolent weapon was organization:

> More and more, the civil rights movement will become engaged in the task of organizing people into permanent groups to protect their own interests and to produce change on their behalf. This is a tedious task which may take years, but the results are more permanent and meaningful.[161]

The limited goals of the earlier sit-ins and freedom rides having been dramatically successful, by 1964 the attention of the movement had turned to the tentacles of racism that permeated every aspect of American life. A campaign was planned for Chicago, the first coherent effort to raise the problems of inferior education in Northern slums, where schools were segregated as a matter of fact if not of law. In addition, black children were allotted inferior facilities, went home to poor housing and unemployed parents, walking through streets divided into gang territory. The Chicago effort was intended to confront more subtle manifestations of urban racism, but its targets were diffuse, and the organization was not ready to manage such complexity. Plans for a Poor Peoples Campaign in Washington, D.C., to highlight the problems of people living in poverty, bogged down. Marching into the capital behind mule-drawn wagons never enlisted King's full

160. C. Vann Woodward, Introduction, in Rustin, *Down the Line*, op. cit., p. xii.

161. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom', originally published in *Ebony,* October 1966, as cited in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*, op. cit., pp. 60, 61.

enthusiasm; it would not tackle endemic economic problems directly. Furthermore, the incessant roar of American airplanes taking off for Viet Nam troubled King greatly, as he saw massive resources siphoned off to fight a war that he considered to be one of the most unjust in world history.[162]

King's final commitment was to the sanitation workers of Memphis, Tennessee. James Lawson, since 1962 the pastor of the Centenary Methodist Church in Memphis, contacted King to tell him about the sanitation workers. Mostly black, they had organized a branch of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and asked the city to recognize their union and offer them a contract to improve wages and conditions. When the municipal authorities refused, on 12 February 1968, 1,200 sanitation workers went on strike. At the time, they were earning $1.25 an hour at most; many were making only a dollar an hour, and still others got 75 cents an hour. On the twenty-third of the month, the police dispersed a nonviolent march down the main street by attacking the striking workers with night-sticks and gassing them with mace, a stinging antipersonnel chemical spray. 'They deliberately broke us up', Lawson recalls, 'maced us, up and down the line, probably 200 or 300 police officers, deliberately; we did not provoke it.'[163]

The community and the workers coalesced into a strategy group called COME, the Committee on the Move for Equality, composed largely of Memphis pastors. The clergy knew from their ministries that the sanitation workers were hard-working and, yet, despite their long hours on the job, lived in poverty. As negotiations with the city stalled, the committee decided to bring in speakers who could attract attention. Roy Wilkins of the NAACP was the first to come, and Bayard Rustin was invited to solidify American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the CIO forces behind the campaign.

Memphis had perhaps the largest privately owned auditorium in the South, capable of seating 8,000 people or more, unlike anything elsewhere available to the black community. With the Bishop Charles Mason Temple (also called Claye Temple) at their disposal, and with the status held by Memphis as one of the largest cities in the region, the basis for another city-wide campaign seemed attractive. When Lawson telephoned King, he agreed to come:

> It is often said that Martin did not want to come and that we put him under pressure. That's nonsense. Martin and I never had that kind of a relationship. I was very sympathetic to the demands upon him. He was already rushing around the

162. By 1953, blending both moral and pragmatic considerations, King had concluded that any warfare should be rejected and that possession of the atomic bomb by both the Soviet Union and the United States meant that war might be made obsolete.

163. Lawson, interview with the author.

world, speaking everywhere. When I told him about the strike, he said he'd been reading about it and yes, he would come, but he would have to juggle his schedule.[164]

Violence broke out in a demonstration led by King on 28 March. Lawson and others claim that it was carried out by thieves, ruffians, maybe *agents provocateurs.* After violence shattered the march, some involved in the Memphis movement lost discipline. King thought that the message that violence was self-destructive was not penetrating. He was heartsick and depressed. Turmoil and disorder had become synonymous with the Memphis endeavor.

When King returned to the city on 3 April, he gave an impassioned address to the mass meeting at the temple. He aroused the crowd by mention of the struggle in Birmingham. Recalling Bull Connor's brandishing of firehoses, King declared: 'Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the transphysics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out.'[165] King's apocalyptic remarks in this last address are often regarded as his best:

> Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything, I'm not fearing any man. 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.'[166]

At the Lorraine Hotel, where King and the others were staying, Andrew Young reported that a local judge had ruled that another march could proceed. King was very pleased and, after dressing for dinner, he stepped onto the balcony. James Earl Ray had him in his sights from a window of a boarding house opposite King's lodging. A single shot rang out.

King accomplished in death what he had not yet been able to do in life. Two days later, 300 black and white clergy marched to City Hall asking recognition of the sanitation workers' union. The business community in Memphis joined the appeal. With interest being expressed by the US Departments of Justice and Labor, the mayor agreed to talks with AFSCME officials. On 8 April, Coretta Scott King led 20,000 people in a memorial procession and addressed the march. Little more than one week later, an agreement was signed between the city and the union. Subsequently, a 1968 Civil Rights Act was passed by the Congress.

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164. Ibid.
165. Martin Luther King Jr, 'I See the Promised Land', speech of 3 April 1968, Memphis, in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*, op. cit., p. 281.
166. Ibid., p. 286.

King himself had been aware that the United States was reaping a 'harvest of hate and shame planted through generations of educational denial, political disfranchisement and economic exploitation of its black population'.[167] In an article published after his assassination, he invoked the biblical prophecy that the sins of the ancestors would be visited upon the third and fourth generations. The country failed to spend money on ghetto schools in part because it was squandering funds on death and devastation in Viet Nam, he remonstrated. He called for a works program such as had been instituted under Roosevelt, during the Great Depression. While he said he would not tolerate violence and was absolutely committed to nonviolent struggle, he forewarned of a discontent so entrenched, anger so consuming and restlessness so pervasive that America's choice was between militant nonviolence or riots.[168]

Howling with grief, blacks in Chicago, Washington, Baltimore and more than a hundred major US cities poured into the streets. Whole sections of cities were burned in the chaos. Shocked, wailing, reeling from the loss of King, many were even more stunned by what they regarded as the hypocritical response of the country's officials. The very authorities who often seemed most ambivalent about civil rights were also unsympathetic to King's quandary as a man caught in the middle of conflicts within the movement and in the larger society. King's death occurred in an atmosphere fraught with tension over race. An unmistakable and ugly white retaliation, or backlash, was evincing itself against the gains that had been won by African-Americans during the preceding years. Presciently, King had before his death written that because of nonviolent resistance, there was 'less loss of life in ten years of southern protest than in ten days of northern riots'.[169] Many blacks specifically cited King's death as cause for the rejection of nonviolence expressed by the upheavals.

'Mine eyes have seen the glory'

Only 39 years of age when he died, Martin Luther King's reach is still being felt. His birthday is celebrated yearly by Americans, along with those of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The Nobel Peace Prize was only the best known of the countless awards bestowed on him. People all over the world, who know little in the way of details about the civil rights movement, know about Martin Luther King.

Yet he was not the tamed and desiccated civil hero of the status quo as sometimes portrayed around the time of his birthday. King did not choose leadership for himself, yet, once entrusted, was willing to stand face

167. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Showdown for Nonviolence', in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope,* op. cit., p. 71.
168. Ibid., pp. 67, 68, 69, 71.
169. Ibid., p. 64.

to face with power, drawing upon all of his moral stature, of which he possessed more than possibly any other American figure of the twentieth century, black or white, in the national or international realm.

Because of his renown, King could never escape being recognized. He was potentially a target everywhere, but he did not flinch. He was prepared to take risks and endure suffering. Although he understood that a people 'plagued with a tragic sense of inferiority resulting from the crippling effects of slavery and segregation' might exhibit symptoms of such crippling, he never made excuses.[170] He was willing to shoulder incomprehensible depths of collective responsibility and had the capacity to endure contumely heaped on him from all sides.

Tensions between organizations or criticism from the jealous had little bearing on King's standing, and it was not important, as critics in the movement scoffed, that King had gone to jail only on thirteen different occasions and rested behind bars for at most thirty-nine days. Despite his constant preoccupation with his own shortcomings, he was able to accept others for who and what they were and was willing to accommodate arrogance, insubordination and egotism from some with whom he worked. After his death, many marveled at his equanimity in the midst of a true people's movement staffed by impetuous, unruly and occasionally mutinous individualists.

The rapid political advances of the intervening years make it easy to overlook the fact that for most of King's short life he was fighting for the simple acceptance of full citizenship for blacks. He was often criticized for not moving swiftly enough or speaking with sufficiently explosive militancy, but he understood that centuries of injustice toward the country's blacks could not be overcome quickly. King repudiated the rejectionism of the separatists in the Black Power, Black Panther and Black Muslim constituencies of the movement. He could well comprehend 'Black Power' and the psychological desire for a self-reliant sense of identity that celebrated African origins. He himself took pride in the fact that three-fourths of the inhabitants of the globe were people of color.[171] Yet his search had always been for strategies that left no bitterness and held open the potential for reconciliation.

King preferred a more sophisticated though no less decisive form of resistance, one in which he created a situation of moral paradox for the white South. Although Black Power had as many meanings as those who heard it – and despite its positive connotations of asserting ethnic dignity – as it was used it hinted of a display of force, confrontation or retaliation. King did not think this strategically sound. His ethics and his practicality

170. Ibid., p. 190.

171. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 220.

converged with nonviolent action into an overriding political astuteness. The white South was mostly Christian, law-abiding and proud of its morals and manners. King favored an approach that would make white Southerners face the incongruity of their racism as something fundamentally anti-Christian. If they could be moved to see the discrepancy between their ideals of civility, courtliness and Christianity on the one hand, and the uncivilized behavior they sanctioned on the other, they might be able to change themselves. In draping the demand for major upheaval in the fabric of a beloved community, King made the inevitabilities of what they faced more permissible and less threatening.

King appreciated that laws and legal changes would not win the hearts and minds of white Americans in the fight against injustice. He wanted Americans to work together in a broad front to destroy racism, and urged them to join collectively not because of any legislated mandate, but because it was 'natural and right'. He knew that African-Americans could triumph through the use of nonviolent resistance, but wanted to guard against any tendencies toward triumphalism. Mutual respect, he thought, could prevent white citizens from feeling defeated or humiliated, and would avoid the temptation for blacks to take on 'the psychology of victors'.[172]

King's philosophy of searching for the means of reconciling people in turmoil has, if anything, become more timely with passing years. Though no less fleeting, reconciliation is better understood as a plausible objective in approaching the world's situations of conflict.

Convinced that 'there is no basic difference between colonialism and segregation', King felt that they were both part and parcel of 'the same tragic doctrine of white supremacy'.[173] His recognition of this link helped to strengthen the connections between the dark-skinned people of North America and those trying to shed the last vestiges of colonial rule all over the globe.

King's vision was consistently larger than the present moment, or any crisis at hand, and retained remarkable balance despite a tempestuous era. His words after the end of the Montgomery bus boycott presciently reveal his foresight: 'The choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence,' King wrote. 'It is either nonviolence or nonexistence.'[174] He was still making this same point, in almost identical words, in his final address at Memphis the night before he was killed. He thought the spiritual power exerted by African-Americans was expansive and felt that they might, through adherence to nonviolence, challenge the planet to seek alternatives to war and its destruction.

172. Ibid., pp. 221, 220.
173. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, op. cit., p. 118.
174. King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 224.

The successes of the civil rights movement should not be underestimated, just as its imperfections should not be overestimated. Relationships between white and black Americans were transformed by the civil rights movement and its personification in King. State-backed vigilante networks were enervated and depleted. Psychological fear, with which most Southern blacks had struggled and which represented a form of internalized bondage, was lessened. The South as a region was able, finally, to rejoin the Union, and the stigma borne by the Southland in the eyes of the rest of the nation and world was lifted. The South as a whole was emancipated by the civil rights movement, and this last part of the country to develop became newly able to pursue economic growth and prosperity.

King's greatest accomplishment was that he created a way for the Southern sense of justice, honor and history to be transformed into regional pride based on overcoming, without monstrous and widespread violence, the perversity of racial injustice. He laid the groundwork for the South to reform itself into a region of dignity and racial amity. He understood that white Southerners were restrained from even worse brutality by virtue of deep cultural and historic beliefs: their strong sense of liberty, individual rights, community obligation and Christian outreach. Yet, while white Southerners were held back by such values, they were being driven in another direction by a tyranny of ancestry, the compulsion to view honor as linked to defeat in the Civil War, and the legacy of a racial caste system. King's nonviolent techniques made full use of this division. When he asked, 'Will you pray with us?' he widened the dichotomy and created a dilemma that, although initially discomforting, ultimately allowed for fundamental societal change without rancor. Rather than assessing blame, his plea for a beloved community created a neutral political place where the ongoing struggle over how the past should be understood could continue, and in such a way that everyone would win. The preoccupation of white Southerners with their families' defeat in the Civil War – the 'lost cause' of the Confederacy – has been replaced by repudiation of the segregationist protocols of the past and pursuit of a vigorous prosperity. The city of Atlanta was able to host the 1996 Olympics because of its valid boast that, since the 1970s, it has been 'the city too busy to hate', more concerned with a thriving future than an unrepentant past.

Not only in the South, but across the nation, laws, statutory programs, values, mores and attitudes swiftly altered. The movement embodied by King also provided a watchtower that could be seen worldwide rising above resignation. After the Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975, the term *civil rights* slipped into the background as *human rights* replaced it and became the prevailing phrase. Still, the movement that had inspired President Jimmy Carter, a white Southerner, to make human rights a centerpiece of US foreign policy provides an enduring impulse motivating the ongoing global nonviolent struggle for human rights.

It is the responsibility of future generations to continue to confront all forms of racism, yet the United States has become a nation acutely cognizant of its unfinished business in the realm of race. In corporations, trade unions, professional fields and other occupations – whatever the activity – Americans are alert to racism. They also take this awareness with them abroad, into foreign commerce, international trade, diplomacy and communications. Without being conscious of deficiencies, positive change is unlikely; attentiveness is the first step to alteration. In large part due to the moral suasion of Martin Luther King Jr, the citizens of the United States have become alert to the necessity for everyday struggle to make real the promise of democracy, and this sensitivity is now embedded in the soul of America.

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Chapter Three

East to West: contacts between the Indian and American movements

Millions learn of Gandhi

The overwhelmingly white news corps in the United States tended habitually to report on King's Gandhian approaches in the Montgomery bus boycott as if they were a new phenomenon. The failure of journalists to understand how important were the early efforts of civil rights leaders traveling between the Indian subcontinent and the United States had the effect of making the Montgomery protest appear more significant in the annals of American history. The more informative story is how, for decades, a detailed transmission of Gandhian philosophies and procedures had been underway to the US black community, such that a Montgomery bus boycott could succeed against a recalcitrant and foolhardy city administration.

The truth of the matter was that, long before the Montgomery boycott, pockets of the American black community had a high level of awareness of the campaigns led by Gandhi. A number of leaders were consciously working to cull lessons from the experiences of peoples around the globe who were similarly trying to break the bonds of oppression and injustice. Explanations of momentous struggle on the Indian subcontinent, including the fight against untouchability, were being directly dispatched to the African-American community through a variety of avenues. News of Gandhi's movement was conveyed not only as a result of trips to India by prominent leaders of the black community making speeches upon their return, but through black-owned newspapers in the United States providing regular accounts from India.

It is in large part the efforts of Marcus M. Garvey to link the struggles and revolutionary changes that were occurring throughout the world with the situation faced by American blacks that led to the swell of Gandhian thinking among black citizens of the United States.[1] Garvey is

1. Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 16–23.

most famous, however, for his Back to Africa movement. White racism was so rampant worldwide, he argued, that the best hope for black people was to return to the continent of their origin. His dramatic call struck a responsive chord with huge numbers of African-Americans, and by 1919 he claimed that his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had grown to a phenomenal 2 million members. Subsequently, he contended that the organization involved 6 million members, enlisted in 900 branches. A Jamaican by birth, Garvey used the UNIA as the stage on which to draw attention to India. He appealed to racial and national pride and spread a message of solidarity among oppressed peoples all over the world. While his theme was similar to that offered by other leading African-Americans, Garvey's words reached the greatest number. In his speeches and writings, he constantly presented Indians as an example of a people who were also moving toward freedom.

While the UNIA lacked financial clout and public pledges from other black leaders, Garvey's rhetoric was influential. Reminding his listeners of the parallels between Gandhi's movement in India and the desires of the American black population for freedom and equality, his message reached well beyond the formal UNIA membership, whatever the exact numbers. Of course, numerous black leaders felt their birthright was in the United States, which they, as much as any group in the country's history, had helped to build. Yet the breadth of Garvey's impact was complemented by influential African-Americans who reinforced the parallels between Gandhi's struggle and that of the blacks the world over. So, as early as the 1920s, years before the Salt March, an undeniable association had been established in the collective African-American mind between Gandhi's freedom struggle and the aspirations of black citizens for equality.

Gandhi and the African-American press

Gandhi's fight against untouchability was perhaps the most evocative and powerful example of the symmetry between his beliefs and experiences and those of black Americans. African-American newspapers illuminated for thousands of readers the person they referred to as 'the little man with big ideas', or words to this effect. The black press expounded on the potential significance that a movement half a world away could hold for the United States. For decades, the newspapers of black America educated their readers about the Indian struggle and, equally important, provided a forum for discussion and debate on the issue.[2] Countless African-Americans were initially attracted to the idea of nonviolent resistance because of the teachings of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, with its suggestion that the gentle would inherit the earth and the mourning would be comforted. The black

2. Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 70, 71.

community was also impressed by the style of leadership exemplified by Gandhi – plain, self-sacrificing, nonretaliatory and honest.

In 1929, the great black philosopher and social thinker W. E. B. DuBois published a letter from Gandhi in a special anniversary edition of *The Crisis*, the regular publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that DuBois had helped to establish. The piece quickly circulated beyond the subscription list ordinarily reached by *The Crisis* and was reprinted in journals, magazines and newspapers.[3]

Not everyone, however, was enthralled with the reports from India. One commentator in particular, William Pickens, regularly wrote disparagingly of Gandhi, questioning the applicability of *satyagraha* for African-Americans:

> Turning to the differences between the two societies, Pickens first pointed out that unlike the Indians, African-Americans were greatly outnumbered by white people. Second, he argued that Gandhi and his compatriots were struggling against 'foreigners'. Whereas African-Americans were pitted against fellow citizens. Therefore, recourse to 'civil disobedience' or 'boycott' was suicidal.[4]

Pickens's views stirred debate. Conversations in black communities focused on whether Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns were active or passive and whether such methods could prove successful when a group was outnumbered and facing seemingly overpowering forces. Continuous news coverage of the Indian struggle was steadily educating African-Americans about the various campaigns of the Indian independence movement, and many were soon convinced that Gandhian nonviolence was a viable option. Pickens subsequently relented, granting that 'the American Negro may learn much, in spirit and determination, from the Gandhi movement'.[5]

One black publisher recalls the period before the Montgomery bus boycott as one in which 'the graveyard of Negro leadership was . . . replete with the bones of men who had attempted to establish an American passive resistance movement based on Gandhian methodology'.[6]

Nonetheless, the idea persisted. A new generation of black leaders was ready to continue the discourse between African-Americans and Indians.

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3. Ibid., p. 39; for *The Crisis*, see Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *Selections from 'The Crisis'*, 2 vols. (Millwood, New Jersey: Krauss-Thomson Organization, 1983). See Chapter Four for an excerpt from 'A Message from Mahatma Gandhi'.
4. Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 58, 59.
5. William Pickens, 'Gandhi-ism and Prayer Will Not Solve Negroes' Problem', in 'Reflections', *New York Amsterdam News*, 10 February 1932, pp. 8, 9, as cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 59, 181 note 31.
6. Lerone Bennett Jr, *What Manner of Man* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), p. 73.

A black Gandhi

Blacks in the United States were quick to realize the importance of the power of a charismatic figure willing to make sacrifices and lead the community in the attainment of social justice despite overwhelming and formidable odds, as Gandhi was doing on the Indian subcontinent. Gradually and perhaps imperceptibly, the view shifted from one of watching and learning from India to one of the African-American community deciding that it needed its own Gandhi; some people went so far as to prepare their community to look for 'a Black Gandhi'.[7] By the end of the Second World War, a significant number of black leaders – A. Philip Randolph, E. D. Nixon, Adam Clayton Powell and others – were at work deepening the awareness of African-Americans about the Gandhian movement and were preparing the way for something that they had only dreamed of earlier.

Meetings took place over a period of decades between Gandhi and black Americans such as Howard Thurman, Edward G. Carroll, Benjamin E. Mays and Channing H. Tobias, with subsequent travel to India by individuals encountered in Chapter Two, such as Bayard Rustin, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson and James Lawson. These trips, frequently in the days before airplane travel, required long voyages on ocean steamers. Such journeys attested strongly to the serious interest of African-Americans in Gandhi and the campaigns in India, and were highly significant in forging links between the two movements in both theory and technique. Personal bonds were formed between many of the Gandhi-watchers and those around Gandhi in India. These leaders were, in fact, part of the growing critical mass that would be necessary for adoption of nonviolent resistance in the United States.

Visits with Gandhi

In the autumn of 1935, a small troupe of African-American educators, including Dean Howard Thurman of Howard University, Sue Bailey Thurman, the Reverend Edward G. Carroll and Phenola Carroll, set off for half a year of touring colleges and universities in Burma, Ceylon and India. Their trip was sponsored by the Student Christian Movement – an outgrowth of the YMCA and YWCA – which had come into existence after the First World War and may have been the first national student group in the United States to integrate itself racially, in 1926.[8] The journey was reported in detail by black newspapers, which kept readers advised of each adventure. One of the most significant and rewarding stops occurred toward the end of their travels, in February 1936, when the party was finally able to meet with Gandhi at his camp near Bardoli. In an unusual gesture,

7. Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 70, 40.
8. John Habner, 'Faith, Hope and Bishop Carroll', *Boston Phoenix*, 13 May 1980, p. 10.

Gandhi stepped out of his tent to receive his guests. So warm was his welcome that Gandhi's secretary turned to Howard Thurman and commented that throughout the length of his service with the Mahatma, he had never before seen him 'greet a visitor so warmly'.[9] Gandhi met with the visitors for three hours. He first asked questions about the life and history of African-Americans and how they had survived slavery. The conversation turned to nonviolent resistance. Carroll, a Methodist minister who served parishes in Washington, Baltimore and New York before later becoming Bishop of the Boston Area of the United Methodist Church, recalled that Gandhi had asked difficult questions of the group. As they met under a mango tree, 'Gandhi wanted to know why we hadn't tried civil disobedience', according to Carroll. 'He asked why all the black people in America didn't stay home from work on a certain day.'[10] Gandhi stressed that nonviolence was the only effective form of direct action. He called it a force 'more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether', the anesthetic. 'Without direct active expression of it, nonviolence . . . is meaningless,' Gandhi emphasized. He urged 'conversion' of the opponent, outlining his belief 'that nonviolence, if expressed in its fullness, was bound to convert the heart of one's adversary'.[11] Gandhi underscored the need for continuous practice and study of nonviolence, and the discussion turned to the importance of training individuals and communities in the techniques of *satyagraha*.

The visitors implored Gandhi to make a trip to America where, they asserted, their community was in need of a guiding figure. Gandhi declined the invitation, saying that his message had not yet been perfected sufficiently in his own land to be carried to others. Before taking leave of Gandhi, at his request Sue Bailey Thurman sang two spirituals: 'Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?' and 'We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder'. Gandhi ended the session by foreshadowing the future: 'It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world.'[12]

While Gandhi refrained from accepting the invitation to visit the United States, these and subsequent sojourners to India gleaned as much information on nonviolent resistance as possible for later application. The steady trickle of travelers was becoming well versed in the political as well as spiritual aspects of Gandhian nonviolence – considerations that perfectly suited the black experience and perspective. Many of the voyagers held pivotal positions as heads of universities or seminaries, they were pastors of

9. Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 87, 88.
10. Habner, 'Faith, Hope and Bishop Carroll', op. cit.
11. Mahadev Desai, 'With Our Negro Guests', *Harijan*, 14 March 1936. A longer excerpt is given in Chapter Four.
12. Ibid.

Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, with whom Gandhi signed the Gandhi–Irwin pact of 1930.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi (second from left) attending the Round Table Conference in London in 1931.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi with Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, and his wife.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi and Kasturbai in Sevagram, near Wardha, in Maharashtra, where they moved in 1936 to renew the 'constructive program' and the fight against untouchability.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

influential congregations and, most of all, they were able to reach others. An important élite used news coverage and networks of friendships that spanned church, academia and social-service organizations to chronicle Gandhi's successes.

The civil rights leader James Farmer was introduced to the thinking and writings of Gandhi by Howard Thurman. Indeed, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) grew out of a paper called 'Provisional Plan for Brotherhood Mobilization', submitted by a youthful Farmer to A. J. Muste of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), on 19 February 1942. Farmer proposed the 'creative' application of Gandhi's ideas while avoiding 'uncritical duplication of the Gandhian steps in organization'. At the hub of his plan was a five-year period of mobilization, or longer, after which 'relentless noncooperation, economic boycott, civil disobedience, et cetera, will be thrown into swing wherever and whenever possible'.[13] CORE, with Farmer as its first national director, was able to carry out its Journey of Reconciliation in 1947, in collaboration with FOR, the forerunner for the 1961 freedom rides.

Approximately ten years after meeting with Gandhi in 1936, Morehouse College president Benjamin Mays opened the eyes of the youthful Martin Luther King Jr to the Mahatma through his Tuesday chapel lectures, as mentioned earlier. Mays had met with Gandhi at his Sevagram ashram in Wardha, for ninety minutes, while he was dean of Howard University's School of Religion. He had traveled to India with Channing H. Tobias, a major figure in the twentieth-century African-American church who was associated with the US-based Student Christian Movement. The two leaders were there to attend the meeting of the YMCA and YWCA International Committee, on behalf of the World Student Christian Federation.[14] The discussion with Gandhi covered nonviolence and the problem of untouchability. Gandhi said nonviolence is the most invisible and effective method for major change, whereas violent activity has visibility although it is 'always transitory'.[15] In later years, Mays recalled the meeting with Gandhi:

> For a very long time I had wished to see and talk with this ninety-pound brown man who had done so much to make Indians proud of their history and culture; who had identified himself with fifty million untouchables . . . and who had started a movement for India's independence.[16]

13. Bennett, *What Manner of Man*, op. cit., p. 74.
14. Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: An Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1979), p. 103.
15. Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'Interview with Professor Benjamin E. Mays', in K. Swaminathan (ed.), *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), Vol. 64, 1958, pp. 221, 222, as cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 94, 190, note 42.
16. Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography of Benjamin E. Mays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 155.

In the session, Mays expressed doubts about the feasibility of using nonviolent means on a mass basis. Gandhi's response was that discipline and training were essential, and he insisted that it could be practiced on a mass scale. When activated, Gandhi said, nonviolence 'travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle'.[17] Upon his return to the United States, Mays spread the idea that the black community needed to assimilate Gandhi's wealth of knowledge:

> The Negro people have much to learn from the Indian. The Indians have learned what we have not learned. They have learned how to sacrifice for a principle. They have learned how to sacrifice position, prestige, economic security and even life itself for what they consider a righteous and respectable cause. Thousands of them in recent times have gone to jail for their cause. Thousands of them have died for their cause.[18]

Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, the president of Howard University, had for more than twenty years provided a crucial link between African-Americans and the Gandhi campaigns. Other leaders of the black community, including Mays and Howard Thurman, considered themselves to have been influenced by the words of Johnson. Having been invited to visit India by the new government in 1949, Johnson spent forty days meeting with a number of Gandhians. He brought back with him a comprehension of *satyagraha*, as well as the passion to express his understanding. His position as a renowned orator offered him platforms from which he could reach large numbers of African-Americans. Martin Luther King Jr, while still a seminarian, was so inspired by Johnson's 1950 sermon at Fellowship House, in Philadelphia, that he rushed to buy six books on Gandhi. This was four or five years before the Montgomery protest began.

Benjamin Mays claimed that Johnson 'was paving the way for Martin Luther King Jr, who got his first doctrine of nonviolence from Mordecai':

> As [King] listened to Mordecai Johnson, he found his skepticism melting before an oratorical onslaught. 'Why was Gandhi a great man?' asked Johnson. On five counts. He had liberated India. He did it without firing a shot. He embraced the 'Untouchables' as children of God and made a place for them in a society that had excluded them, segregated them. For his exemplary and saintly personal life alone, he was a great man. But the capstone of it all, said Johnson, was this: he had shown how to harness the redemptive power of love to social issues, and through it, change had come. He had even, like Jesus, died a redemptive death which abated the fearful strife between Hindus and Muslims that had raged after independence.[19]

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17. Mays, *Born to Rebel*, op. cit., p. 223. Also see Chapter Four.
18. Benjamin E. Mays, 'What Are the Differences between Gandhi and Nehru; Dr. Mays Asks, Gives Answer', *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 5 June 1937, pp. 9–19, as cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 96, 97.
19. Benjamin E. Mays, 'The Relevance of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson for Our Times', 27 January 1978, pp. 2, 4, Benjamin E. Mays Papers, Box 2, Moorland-Spingarn

The least of these

As Gandhi had battled for those who were so low as to be unapproachable, renaming them *harijans*, or children of God, King fought for those whom the Bible termed 'the least of these'.[20] The descendants of slaves needed no explanation of the injury felt by an outcaste. Gandhi's campaigns against untouchability drew instant recognition by African-Americans.

In 1942, Bayard Rustin had written a theoretical essay arguing with remarkable foresight that nonviolent struggle was the only choice that could end Jim Crow. Labor troubles were boiling over race, Rustin wrote; wildcat strikes were occurring, white and black shipyard workers were going armed to work in Mobile, Alabama, and black soldiers who had fought in the Second World War were being shot by whites. He evaluated the situation:

> In all those places where we have a voice, it is our high responsibility to indicate that the Negro can attain progress only if he uses, in his struggle, nonviolent direct action – a technique consistent with the ends he desires. Especially in this time of tension we must point out the practical necessity of such a course.
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> Nonviolence as a method has within it the demand for terrible sacrifice and long suffering, but, as Gandhi has said, 'freedom does not drop from the sky'. One has to struggle and be willing to die for it. . . . The American Negro . . . [can] assist in developing, along with the people of India, a new dynamic force for the solution of conflict.[21]

When he packed his bags and went to work for Martin Luther King in Montgomery, Rustin was a seasoned organizer whose resoluteness as a trainer was secondary only to his adamance in insisting on nonviolent strategies. He believed in racial pride and thought Back to Africa movements were laudable in the sense of international solidarity, yet he regarded them as potentially hurtful fantasies. He believed notions of armed self-defense to be dangerous. He thought strategies that would shock or traumatize whites were incapable of winning.[22] Secessionist visions of a separate existence apart from whites were considered by Rustin to be feverish delusions. He thought

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Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. See Thurman, *With Head and Heart: An Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, op. cit., pp. 87, 106. According to Thurman, 'again and again in public addresses [Mordecai Wyatt Johnson] paid authentic tribute to the journey into freedom charted by this "little brown man"', as cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 146, 147.

20. 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:40 (New Revised Standard Version)).
21. Bayard Rustin, 'The Negro and Nonviolence', first published in *Fellowship* (October 1942), reprinted in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 10, 11.
22. Bayard Rustin, 'From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement', in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, op. cit., pp. 116, 117.

they would only speed a reactionary impulse in the country against black people.

Rustin viewed the pursuit of equality by African-Americans as revolutionary, however, because it could not be satisfied within the existing political and economic parameters. Never a dreamer, institutions held the key for Rustin. He wanted political, social and economic institutions to be reconstructed so that, subsequently, 'the ineluctable gradualism of history [would] govern the formation of a new psychology'.[23] His experience with movements and causes led him to but one conclusion on how such institutional change could be won: nonviolent direct action. Knowing of the religious sensibilities of those for whom he was writing, in 1942 he penned: 'we can add to world justice by placing in the hands of thirteen million black Americans a workable and Christian technique for the righting of injustice and the solution of conflict'.[24]

Gordon Hancock, a writer for the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, reflected on Gandhi's life in February 1948, and pointed to certain affinities between Jesus Christ and Gandhi, as well as making a parallel for African-Americans:

> Jesus Christ employed this superhuman power and wrecked the Roman Empire: Gandhi employed it and hurled the British Empire from the pedestal of power. The all-important question for the subjugated peoples of color to fathom is, how far will they go in employing might and power for their deliverance, instead of appealing to the Supreme Court of Heaven by their righteous lives and their faithful prayers?[25]

One small example of the potency of the black American identification with Gandhi may be found in an account concerning an Illinois state representative, William E. King, of the Republican Party. The *Atlanta Daily World*, the only black daily newspaper in the country in 1932, reported the legislator's remarks on its front page. The story noted the significance of Gandhi's experiments on untouchability, including the lawmaker's assertion that 'Gandhi's fasting has seriously disturbed this old persecution'. He suggested, 'it may be that the end of cruel caste prejudices in India is at hand and that the sixty millions of "untouchables" will be accorded their

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23. Ibid., p. 117. I learned most of what I know about building coalitions from a 1964 workshop run by Bayard Rustin for civil rights workers.
24. Rustin, 'The Negro and Nonviolence', op. cit., p. 12.
25. Gordon Hancock, 'Mohandas Gandhi Ends Gloriously' in 'The Point', *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 14 February 1948, p. 9. Also see Sirdar J. J. Singh, 'Mahatma Gandhi – India's Bapu', *The Crisis,* Vol. 55 (March 1948), pp. 82, 83, 91. In March 1948, J. J. Singh, an Indian nationalist who worked from the United States for Indian independence, contributed an article to mark Gandhi's death. Singh wrote that Gandhi had rid the Indians of their fearfulness of the British. In Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 143, 201 note 38.

human status'.[26] He then compared the status of India's untouchables with that of Southern blacks.

By 1949, while King was still at Crozer Theological Seminary, Howard Thurman had written a book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, on American blacks and nonviolence. Once the Montgomery bus boycott had begun, King read (or re-read) it.[27] One reason King thought Gandhi's methods could be readily absorbed by the black community was that his techniques were based on Love, as spoken of in the Sermon on the Mount, and Gandhi had publicly embraced the sermon's core meaning.[28] To a black community that was deeply Christian and biblically grounded, a forgiving people who possessed profound spiritual resources, the idea of militant resistance and revolutionary change based on principles of Christian love was not foreign.

At approximately the same time that King was hearing of Gandhi from Thurman and Johnson, Andrew Young, later a confidant of King's, was starting to read Gandhi. In the early 1950s, Young was given a copy of a book by Jawaharlal Nehru about Gandhi and a collection of Gandhi's essays, published by the Quakers. Recognizing issues that had faced Gandhi under the British Raj from his own experiences, Young 'began reading with more and more excitement, continuing with Gandhi's *Autobiography* and any book on or by Gandhi that I could lay my hands on.'[29] Subsequently becoming an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, Young has frequently observed that the Christian message is inherently revolutionary. The gospel's declaration to all persons that they are children of God confronts the institutions and forces that perpetuate inequality.

Gandhi had argued that the dehumanization of the untouchables corrupted all of India, and that every Indian citizen was lowered by the cruelty shown to the outcastes. He also thought that the Great Powers were themselves degraded by their harsh treatment of those who happened not to be Caucasian. 'Let me tell you, too, that I do not regard England, or for that matter America, as free countries,' Gandhi had written. 'They are free after their own fashion, free to hold in bondage the coloured races of

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26. 'India, Dixie Compared by GOP, Campaigner Compares "Untouchable" and South's Negroes', *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 October 1932, p. 1, cited in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, op. cit., pp. 62, 182 note 38.
27. Bennett, *What Manner of Man*, op. cit., pp. 74, 75.
28. Matthew 5:7. Although many view the three chapters of the New Testament containing the Sermon on the Mount – in the Gospel of Matthew and including the Lord's Prayer – as the essence of the teachings of Jesus, Gandhi found it relevant and referred to it. One such reference is found in Chapter Four.
29. Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 57.

the earth.'[30] The groundwork was being laid for Martin Luther King, in a few short years, to proclaim that the American system of democracy was demeaned by the country's treatment of its black citizenry. He would also proclaim that the civil rights movement was completing the American Revolution. Comments the historian Harvard Sitkoff:

> King's neo-Gandhian persuasion fit the needs of the American South in the mid-twentieth century. It offered something to nearly all in an especially palatable way. . . . King also emphasized that the achievement of the movement's goals would result not in victory for blacks alone but triumph for all Americans. . . . At the least, this disarming message from a man of God minimized virulent white opposition and made the inevitable appear a bit more acceptable.[31]

The turn to Gandhi and the Indian experience was comfortable and a good fit.

A living bridge linking Gandhi, King and the present

All but unknown to the millions of those who have studied Gandhi and King is an individual who is, as much as anyone, their connector. He is a human bridge linking Gandhi to the American civil rights movement and beyond to contemporary struggles. Today, in central Los Angeles, the Holman United Methodist Church has as its pastor the Reverend James M. Lawson Jr. At any given moment of the week, he may be leading the congregation in Bible study, working to train street gangs in Los Angeles in nonviolent action and aiding them to disarm or preparing to fly to Africa to train church leaders in nonviolent methods. A commitment to nonviolent resistance has been central to his life, leading him to India, to work with both of the principal Southern civil rights organizations, to Memphis, Los Angeles and on to the scenes of other conflicts.

Lawson grew up in Massillon, Ohio, and attributes his convictions regarding nonviolent struggle to his mother. Upon returning home from Horace Mann Elementary School one day, Lawson, aged 10, was asked by his mother for help on a chore and headed back into town:

> A little white child in an automobile yelled 'nigger' out the opened window. I walked over . . . and, since I was in a hurry running my mother's errand, I smacked the child and went on my way. When the Lawson kids got called 'nigger' on the streets or at school, we usually fought. I don't know where we got that from, except that we figured that it was something to fight over.[32]

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30. S. R. Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Non-violence* (New Delhi: Criterion Publications, 1986), p. 61.
31. Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954–1992* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993), p. 54.
32. James M. Lawson Jr, interview with the author, Los Angeles, California, 27 February 1996.

On the return trip home, aware of possible repercussions, Lawson tried to find the parents of the offending child, to talk to them, but the car was gone. At home, he sat in his favorite chair in the kitchen, as his mother prepared the evening meal, and told her of his day including the incident. Without turning from the stove, Lawson's mother replied, 'Jimmy, what good did that do?'

> She talked about who I was, the fact of God's love, that we were a family of love and that such an incident could not hurt me, because of who I was. I don't remember anyone else being around, but a stillness took over my being at that moment. It was, as I realized much later on, a mystical experience. In a very real way, my life stood still. I realized in that stillness that I had changed forever. One of the phrases my mother used in her conversation with me was that 'there must be a better way'. I determined, from then on, that I would find the better way.[33]

The son of a Methodist minister, Lawson grew up in a parsonage that received weekly periodicals from the African-American press, of which the *Pittsburgh Courier*, whose editor had traveled to India, was their staple. As soon as he was able to read newspapers, he became acquainted with the experiments of Gandhi and the various *satyagraha* campaigns. All during the 1940s and 1950s, the family discussed the news from India at the dinner table.

Lawson was steeped in the study of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, from an early age. Well read, he had thoroughly investigated Gandhi's autobiography by his teen years, and with every passing season would explore still more books about Gandhi and his associates. Once he reached Baldwin-Wallace College, in Ohio, he was heavily involved in studying Thoreau, Gandhi and Tolstoy. He found ways to organize the obligatory student essays and compositions around these figures and, when this could not be arranged, read them anyway. He also scrutinized the work of the German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York under Reinhold Niebuhr, and who chose to leave the safety of the United States to return to his native Germany and work for the 'confessing church'. Back home, Bonhoeffer denounced Hitler, joined the resistance against Nazism, and was hanged by the Nazis in the closing days of the Second World War.[34] Lawson also made a point of studying detailed accounts and case-studies of the resistance to Nazism in Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. Knowing of John Ruskin's influence on Gandhi, he read his writings on political economy. He also immersed himself in the writings of British and

33. Ibid.
34. Alan Cowell, 'Berlin Court Exonerates Anti-Nazis: Ruling Affects Opponents of Hitler Executed during World War II', *International Herald Tribune*, 17–18 August 1996, p. 1; Gustav Niebuhr, 'Undoing the Legacy of Nazi Courts', *New York Times*, 11 February 1996, Week in Review, p. 6.

American pacifists, of whom he considered himself one. Although pacifism and nonviolent struggle are not the same, a number of pacifists have admonished the use of nonviolent resistance. At Baldwin-Wallace, Lawson first encountered A. J. Muste, one of the century's most influential pacifists. The elder political analyst frequently visited to lecture:

> All of us in history classes were required to hear Muste. I was thrilled. He made me realize that I was not alone in my experimentation, that there was a world movement, and a national movement. . . . He acquainted me with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which I joined on the spot in 1947. That meant that I got exposed to their book list.[35]

Well ahead of the sit-ins of the Southern civil rights movement, in the late 1940s and early 1950s Lawson had organized sit-ins and protests directed at establishments that discriminated against blacks in his home town of Massillon. He also decided that he would not cooperate with governmental conscription for military service. On his eighteenth birthday, Lawson registered for the draft but wrote across the form that he was unsure whether he was doing the right thing. By 1948, he had made the decision that he was a conscientious objector. Concluding that there were some laws that a person of conscience could not obey, he had originally reached this determination with regard to laws of segregation and subsequently resolved that it also pertained to conscription. He did not try to obtain the ministerial deferment to which he was entitled, having already decided to go into the ministry. He chose, instead, to act as a noncooperator with the draft:

> The call to the ministry was a nonviolent call and it meant that my life would be a struggle against a status quo that was racist, segregationist and violent. I could not go into military uniform, and decided that conscription acts were immoral, and that I would not obey them. By the time of the Korean War, I had already sent my draft cards back. In response to efforts by the Draft Board to get me classified, I wrote back letters refusing and explaining why. As a follower of Jesus, I could not inflict harm on anyone.[36]

The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested Lawson in 1950. At a government office in Canton, Ohio, eight miles from home, he was booked for violation of the Draft Act, fingerprinted and photographed. The Methodist Church, meanwhile, was working on Lawson's behalf. Then vice-president of the national Methodist Youth Fellowship, Lawson had been accepted to teach high school in what is now Zimbabwe. The church petitioned the court to place him on probation and under their control. The US attorney, believing Lawson to be a leader, fought the suggestion so as to make an example of Lawson. The aspiring minister was not sent

35. Lawson, interview with author.
36. Ibid.

to Africa but was, instead, found guilty and sentenced to three years in federal prison, of which he served only thirteen months of the original sentence, from April 1951 to May 1952. The court released him into the hands of the Methodist Board of Missions, and he was assigned to teach in India.

Lawson arrived at Nagpur, in Maharashtra and at the crossroads of India, barely four years after Gandhi's death. He spent the next three years at Hislop College, founded in 1884 by the Reverend S. Hislop, a missionary of the Free Church of Scotland. Later Presbyterian, the college was subsequently affiliated with Nagpur University. During Lawson's time on the subcontinent, he met countless individuals who had worked with Gandhi. He learned firsthand of his *satyagraha* campaigns from *satyagrahis*, visited the Ahmedabad textile mills, sat in Gandhi's Sevagram ashram in Wardha and looked upon the other sites of his struggle. He had the opportunity more than once to meet with Jawaharlal Nehru. Lawson would soon be presented with the chance to put these experiences to use. The doorway through which he would walk to apply his knowledge with immediate and telling impact would be opened by Martin Luther King Jr.

When in 1957 King first met Lawson during a speaking engagement at Oberlin College, he had implored Lawson not to wait to join the movement in the South. Lawson's first step was to contact A. J. Muste, who was still guiding FOR. Muste offered Lawson a stepping stone to the accomplishment of his hope of working in a Southern parish where he would be able to tackle segregation as part of his ministry. It was also an answer to King's emphatic appeal. The job offered by Muste was as Southern field secretary of FOR, and within a few months, by January 1958, Lawson was based in Nashville. Upon his arrival, he found that Glenn Smiley, national field director of FOR, had arranged for Lawson to run a full schedule of workshops – including one to take place early that year at the first annual meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Columbia, South Carolina.

At the South Carolina gathering, King made an exuberant introduction of Lawson as FOR's new regional representative and discussed the organization's role in Montgomery. 'Be back promptly at 2.00 p.m.', King told the delegates, 'for Brother Lawson's workshop on nonviolence!' Several minutes before the appointed time, King was sitting in the first pew, waiting for the three-hour session to start:

> Martin did that at every SCLC meeting as long as he lived. He would ask me to conduct an afternoon workshop, usually two or three hours, and he would arrange for it to be 'at-large' so that everyone could attend, with nothing else to compete. He put it on the schedule himself. A few minutes early, he would show up and sit alone, as an example, in the front row.[37]

37. Ibid.

Back in Nashville, Lawson's Monday-evening workshops during the autumn of 1959 were training the students at the core of the Nashville movement. Schooled in a radical interpretation of what it means to be both nonviolent and Christian, their deliberations about Gandhi, Thoreau and the Bible gave a distinctive character to the local movement in Nashville. Throughout the short decade of the civil rights movement, Nashville remained staunchly committed to disciplined nonviolent struggle and demonstrated remarkable cohesion and strategic genius.

Lawson had been the first black student to be admitted to Vanderbilt University's divinity school, but his time at seminary was cut short. In the course of coordinating a boycott in protest of the segregation laws, a meeting with the mayor of Nashville landed him on the front pages of the local newspapers: 'The mayor said that we were breaking the law. I said that the law was used as a gimmick, and where law was a gimmick, it should not be obeyed. He jumped up immediately afterwards and said I was calling for a bloodbath in Nashville.'[38] Headlines in the *Nashville Banner* blared that Lawson was an outsider, labeled him a communist, and accused him of leading dignified students 'down the primrose path to hell', as he recalled the event. The publisher of the *Banner* had ties to Vanderbilt and said the theology student was 'using Vanderbilt as a nefarious base for illegal activities', according to Lawson. In a scene that was to be repeated dozens if not hundreds of times across the Southland during those years, the university trustees demanded the withdrawal of the movement leader. Lawson refused to step down, but complied with the request for a statement on what is meant by the term *civil disobedience*. Despite his written testimony on the tradition of openly disobeying illegitimate or immoral orders and laws, thus remaining true to one's deeper convictions, he was, nonetheless, expelled and arrested. Recalls Lawson: 'That afternoon, the movement got word that an arrest order had been made for me. We agreed that I would be at First Baptist Church, our headquarters, to be arrested there. . . . I sensed that this was part of a plan to crush the sit-ins.'[39]

Despite faculty protests, the university administration would not rescind the expulsion. Several professors in the School of Theology resigned, as faculty from throughout the institution took up his cause. The graduate schools were stunned by this violation of academic freedom. In protest, letters of resignation were signed by 400 faculty and handed over to an academic committee that was authorized to submit them to the chancellor if he did not rescind Lawson's expulsion. The chancellor proposed that Lawson could return the following autumn, but he would be confined to the School of Theology, be barred from any classroom work, and could

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.

receive his degree in December. Rather than compromise, Lawson looked into other divinity schools and found that Boston University, where his friend Martin Luther King had done his graduate work, was ready to receive him. To Boston he went.

Almost forty years later, many of the students in the Nashville group that Lawson prepared are still active, such as John Lewis, Diane Nash and Bernard Lafayette. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Lawson's seminars can be felt today, as such participants have continued, in one way or another, to be advocates of nonviolent change in their roles as educators, members of Congress, government officials, academicians and writers. Lawson was elected National Chairperson of FOR, in May 1995.[40]

As the result of Lawson's training in the 1990s, some Los Angeles street-gang leaders like to think of themselves as inheritors of the legacy left by Martin Luther King. The senior leaders of the 'Crips' and the 'Bloods' came together, in 1994, to negotiate a truce to end gang warfare, following long months of private negotiations in which Lawson was an adviser behind the scenes. Although the truce subsequently fell apart, hopes rise for another. Lawson's indoctrination had brought the young leaders to make a commitment to nonviolence, including the process of disarming, the byproduct of a realization that conditions were worsening for everyone through continuing violence. Some of the most notorious of the gang leaders met regularly to spread the truce movement, with the result that former gangsters were propounding nonviolent solutions to conflict. Their peers reported that they had unusual legitimacy. Rap music began to change as a result of these developments, some songs advocating nonviolence.[41] The success of this endeavor suggests the importance of projecting nonviolent solutions in new idioms, for both domestic and international conflicts.

The impact that can be made by one individual may be no better shown than by James Lawson. As when he crossed arms to hold hands with

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40. In 1996, Vanderbilt University expressed its contrition by awarding Lawson an honorary doctoral degree. On the day that I contacted Lawson to arrange an interview, he was preparing to leave for Africa, to train Rwandan church leaders in Kigali on the basics of nonviolent struggle.

41. With the help of a Los Angeles philanthropic organization created by several entertainers, younger gangsters in car-theft rings were given community-service money in the summer of 1994. Where they had normally taken home about $2,000 a week from car theft, instead they received $250 cash a week. Philanthropic sources would have preferred to offer jobs but, as this was not possible, they funded other efforts. They reported that the same gang leaders, who worked in a dropout-retrieval program, were responsible for 17,000 youths returning to school in L.A. over a decade. 'We said that nothing could be done to salvage the underclass, but we should not give up on them,' claims long-time political activist Margery Tabankin, who worked with Lawson in the endeavor. 'These young men and women are the hope of the African-American community.' Interview with the author, Los Angeles, 27 February 1996.

Martin Luther King and sing the anthem of the civil rights movement that closed virtually every mass meeting after 1960, 'Deep in My Heart, I Do Believe, We Shall Overcome Some Day', Lawson made it figuratively possible for King to cross arms and clasp hands with Mohandas Gandhi.

Unadulterated message delivered to the world

Cynics might argue that neither Gandhi nor King succeeded in achieving his maximum goals. After gaining national independence, Gandhi wrote that India had still 'to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinct from its cities and towns'.[42] He knew it would take more than statutory change for economic exploitation to end. Today, turmoil periodically erupts between Hindus and Muslims. Some Indians see the future of India as imperiled by 'communalism' and the pandering by some groups to those who are antagonistic toward the country's 110 million Muslims.[43]

Yet even the most hard-boiled pragmatist or stern realist would concede that for the first time in history, an empire was induced through nonviolent resistance to yield control of a subject country. In so doing, India was freed to become one of the globe's most populous and influential democracies. When India obtained independence, it had an impact on more than her own people. India depleted the British Empire of the political resources required to sustain its colonial hegemony. By draining European colonialism of its certitude, it all but ended imperialism. Yet, Gandhi had emphasized that lifting British rule was not enough. He argued that it was also important for India to rid itself of cruel practices and inner contradictions that held all Indians back. As far as the law is concerned, untouchability was vanquished in 1947. This action, about which African-Americans were acutely aware, emboldened hopes of something similar occurring in the United States. It also enlivened the belief that American blacks could make this happen through their own endeavors.

International politics today owes a tremendous debt to Gandhi's careful exploration of the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. Diplomats, academicians and analysts concerned with ethnic and religious disputes benefit in enduring ways from Gandhi's psychology and discernment of

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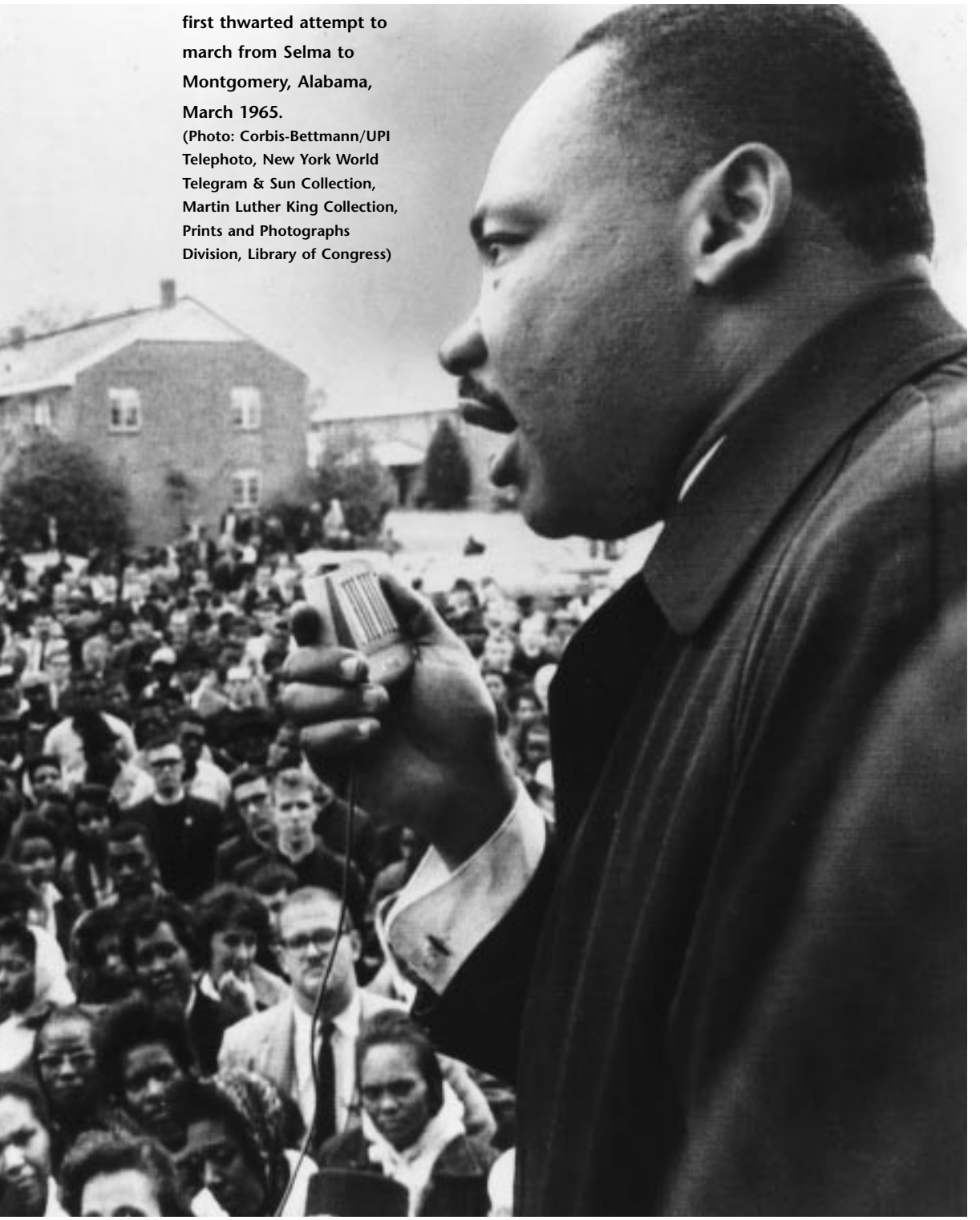
42. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 15 February 1948, as cited in Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyapith, Peace Research Centre, 1992), p. 159.

43. Muslims today account for 12 percent of India's 920 million people. The 1992 demolition of a sixteenth-century mosque in the northern India city of Ayodhya sparked Hindu–Muslim turmoil that resulted in 2,500 deaths across the country. Kenneth J. Cooper, 'India's Ruling Congress Party Concedes a Historic Defeat', *Washington Post*, 10 May 1996, p. A1; John F. Burns, 'Lower Castes Hold the Key As India Gets Ready to Vote', *New York Times*, 10 April 1996, p. A1.

Entry into Montgomery at the end of the successfully concluded five-day Selma march, 25 March 1965. King and Coretta are in the center. Bayard Rustin is on the left of the photograph wearing an Astrakhan hat. To Rustin's left is A. Philip Randolph. To Randolph's left is John Lewis, almost concealed. At King's right is United Nations envoy Ralph Bunche. In rolled-up shirt sleeves is Andrew Young, and to his left, wearing a skullcap, is James Bevel. (Photo: Matt Herron)



King addressing a crowd that assembled after the first thwarted attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 1965.
(Photo: Corbis-Bettmann/UPI Telephoto, New York World Telegram & Sun Collection, Martin Luther King Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

power relationships. Broad realization permeates the field of conflict resolution – whose very existence is indebted to Gandhi – that there are choices and methods that are conducive to reconciliation and can minimize the residue of bitterness.

If we accept Gandhi's fundamental belief that conflict is unavoidable, it puts us one step closer to preparing for the continuous management of conflicts. His view contains within it an imperative: Conflicts must continuously be addressed, even if they will be solved only until the next time. This view, which is becoming more prevalent, is attributable to him. Furthermore, conflict should not be resolved too fast, he thought, because it would not allow for institutional maturation to reflect new awareness. Gandhi's willingness for protracted nonviolent struggle, allowing for evolutions on both sides, needs more study for the future. His insistence on seeking negotiations with the adversary is an unmistakable warning against foreign policies that rely on severing relations and halting discussion. Maintain contact at all costs, he would say, because a relationship with conflict is preferable to none. He believed that positive social and political transformations can result from continuing negotiations, even if there is disharmony. Of course he would also question the assumption that the dominance of one nation over another should ever be at the core of statecraft, a view gaining adherents as the nation-state evolves.

It has often been said that Gandhi was able to rid India of the British through nonviolence because the colonists were gentlemen who possessed a rigid code of honor and whose national character was based on the rule of law derived from the Magna Carta of A.D. 1215. This is too simplistic an analysis, especially if we remember the April 1919 massacre at Amritsar. *Satyagraha* is a highly sophisticated concept that understands conflict to be a chance for rearranging the sources of the dispute and, therefore, an opportunity that may potentially be of benefit to all persons. Gandhi always predicted that with his method it should be possible for the British to leave as friends – which they did – and the two nations soon thereafter became joined on a more egalitarian basis in the Commonwealth.

Historians, patiently writing with steady hand about the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and beyond, will be able to ascertain a tangible system of Gandhian thought and action. Perhaps it will not be traceable through texts and tomes so much as through oral history and word of mouth, although scholarly study and critical evaluation will still be crucial to discerning the full significance of nonviolent upheavals. Often through hearsay, a wave has pulsed outward, mainly westward, from India, beginning before Gandhi's death.[44] Gandhi's *satyagraha* is 'not out of date', says one

44. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal*, op. cit., p. 137.

of his associates, 'it is just out of practice'.[45] We ignore Gandhi's continuing relevance at our own peril.

Almost any country or any century

Seven years after India attained its freedom, on the other side of the globe a nonviolent protest began that was based on the same principles and understanding of power. It soon evolved into a regional mass movement that sought to persuade a nation to confront its institutionalized racism and change the laws that upheld it. Within one decade, major national legislation had destroyed the legal supports for the racial caste system in the United States. African-Americans did indeed overcome, as the anthem foretold, despite a high price, including the loss of the person who was perhaps the twentieth century's greatest American.

'Integration', meaning the elimination of racial segregation, 'is more complicated than independence,' Harris Wofford observed.[46] The task in the United States would be greater than Gandhi's, as a young white librarian had written the Montgomery newspaper, 'for they have greater prejudice to overcome'.[47] Indeed, the civil rights movement alone could not end racial injustice in the United States, nor poverty. American cities still experience violence and despair. New mutations of racism appear and blot out memories of positive change. King was not naïve; he needed no reminder that it would take decades for prosperity to be realized in African-American neighborhoods.

The civil rights movement brought about the establishment of first-class citizenship and constitutional rights for black citizens and did far more. In the minds of African-Americans, it replaced self-abnegation with pride and self-respect. Aroused was a sense of a worldwide alliance of people struggling to be free. The civil rights movement awakened millions of white Americans to an awareness of the historic contributions that had been made by the black community even as it confronted them with their own prejudices. Resting on its Gandhian logic, the movement helped Americans to realize that the ability to change attitudes is something that resides in their own hands. Racism and its next of kin, hatred and fear, are not natural states of being. They are learned. Formed over time, bigotry has its origins in family teaching and education, or the lack of it, and is reinforced by a long

45. Devi Prassad worked with Gandhi until 1962, afterward chairing War Resisters International in London. Personal communication to author, 27 March 1995, Washington, D.C.

46. Harris Wofford Jr, 'Non-Violence and the Law: The Law Needs Help', *Journal of Religious Thought,* Vol. 15 (Autumn–Winter 1957–58), as reprinted in Hugo Adam Bedau (ed.), *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 69.

47. Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 77.

acculturation process. The movement helped Americans confront themselves and acknowledge that despite enormous strides in a relatively short time, the US landscape was still cut into segments of segregated living arrangements.

The civil rights movement made the United States as a whole more democratic, a fact that is linked to its use of Gandhian nonviolence. Since the decision to accept suffering cannot be externally imposed, and no one can force another person to accept the penalties for nonviolent resistance, the decision of the group begins with the conviction of the individual. Nonviolent direct action relies on coordination and unity, and builds on the individual's determination; decisions thus tend to be made democratically. Young whites were empowered by the movement as much as blacks. McCarthyism was finally laid to rest as the civil rights struggle gained momentum. Academic freedom was expanded, perhaps painfully so, as debate filled classrooms and campuses about the war in Viet Nam. When challenges were made of the de facto segregation of the urban schools of the North, the issue of quality education for all American children was broadly raised.

Both Gandhi and King were able to make connections between the local struggles close to them and those of more transcendent implications. Gandhi transmuted what began as fierce nationalism into canons of self-governance and independence. King transformed the cause of one minority's omission from citizenship into the perfection of democracy and freedom for all and a struggle against poverty and war: 'Love is the watchword for peace and liberty.' While their precepts, principles and techniques are universal in their implications, these two leaders showed that the arsenal of nonviolent struggle could be tailored to address specific needs, cultures, religions, politics, and actors and actresses in any struggle.

Nonviolence is not the only thing that Gandhi and King have in common. Each has become a mentor a thousand times over; each informs contemporary efforts for social change and justice. Their impact has been directly felt in struggles across the globe. Their individual and cumulative legacies are clearly visible. Their two far-reaching popular movements on opposite sides of the globe accomplished profound changes. Since then, nonviolent resistance has enlarged and expanded, a testament to its ability to work constructively in almost any country or any century. It is better understood and more accessible because of Gandhi's codification and King's amplification. Its ideas and methods have spread through countless cultures and religions, exemplifying the versatility that both men knew was inherent in nonviolent direct action and could not be limited by time.

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Chapter Four

Gandhi and King, in their own words

The spiritual wealth and religious confidence possessed by Gandhi and King sometimes obscure the hardheaded thinking that underlies the use of nonviolent resistance. If we dig deeply into Gandhi's thinking on Truth and King's focus on Love (*agape*), a simple concept is shared: popular cooperation can be withdrawn through nonviolent techniques of resistance. In the case of Gandhi, this meant that no government can exist if the people cease to obey it. For King, it signified that cooperation can be withheld from a government, laws or customs that treat a group as inferior.

No one, Gandhi believed, lost freedom except through his or her own weakness. He thought all exploitation was based on cooperation, whether willing or forced, by the exploited, and that there could be no exploitation if people refused to obey their exploiters. He considered political systems to be dependent on voluntary submission, obedience and cooperation from civilians – acquiescence that can be withdrawn. King, too, understood that the noncooperation of African-Americans with the laws that treated them unfairly was obligatory for change, because the system could not bend of its own accord. Nothing less than an understanding of the nature of power underscores both of their approaches. It is not surprising that nonviolent struggle has been described as the political equivalent of war.[1]

This illuminating insight into power may be attributable to the sixteenth-century French writer Éstienne de la Boétie. To Gandhi and King, his wisdom seemed obvious: you can refuse to be governed by those who dominate you even if you are in bondage or servitude.[2] Gandhi may well

1. Gene Sharp, 'The Political Equivalent of War' – Civilian Defense, No. 555 of *International Conciliation* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 1965.
2. Étienne de la Boétie, 'Discours de la servitude volontaire', *Œuvres complètes d'Éstienne de la Boétie* (Paris: J. Rouam & Cie., 1892).

have been influenced by Boétie through his study of Leo Tolstoy, as reflected in passages of his booklet *Hind Swaraj*, concerning Indian independence. King's 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail' is permeated by this principle. In addition to Boétie, as both Gandhi and King recorded, they were each affected early in life by study of the 1849 essay on resistance to civil government by Henry David Thoreau.

Gandhi and King shared another insight: that oppressors can be held down by their own practices of cruelty to others. In an inversion of conventional thinking, both Gandhi and King believed that those whose purpose is merely to keep things as they are – thereby maintaining injustice – rank among those who can themselves gain freedom as a result of non-violence.

When Gandhi used the term *freedom*, he could have had any of a dozen meanings in mind that he regularly used, including inward freedom or the quest for self-perfection, absence of coercion or, more often, the exercise of moral power, which was a key to his concept of transforming social relationships. When King invoked *freedom*, it was often with several simultaneous allusions in mind: the specific circumstances of emancipation from slavery, freedom in the political sense as defined in the French and American Revolutions and as a theological concept suggesting the grace of God.

Neither Gandhi nor King should be approached as infallible authorities on social action, political change or personal choices. They should be treasured for the wisdom of their insights, the uniqueness of their formulations, the richness of their inspiration and their intelligence in invoking symbols. They were leaders who guided by example. Each was trying to bring about transformations at the very moment that he spoke or wrote. Neither was writing for posterity or literary contemplation, and their works contain inaccuracies. Gandhi's phraseology often sounds archaic, and King at times deliberately chose to speak in the vernacular. Both universally used the male gender when referring to both men and women – what Gandhi would have learned from the British, and still the US custom until comparatively recently.

The quotations for this chapter have been assembled by two scholars. B. R. Nanda, of New Delhi, is an historian and leading authority on Gandhi. The author of innumerable books on the Mahatma and his associates, Nanda's 1958 work *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography* has been reprinted in India, the United Kingdom and the United States, and has been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Hindi and other Indian languages. Clayborne Carson, another historian, is both Director and Senior Editor for The Martin Luther King Jr, Papers Project, at Stanford University in Stanford, California. Also professor of history at Stanford, he has written extensively concerning the 1960s American civil rights struggle. Following is a compilation of quotations gathered by Nanda and Carson. They are arranged with commentary by the author.

Gandhi on himself

Gandhi's writings fill eighty volumes. Throughout his life, he wrote energetically and regularly in a number of national journals to advocate his ideas. He had a keen grasp of the significance of information in struggles. He was not writing for the sake of literature: 'Action is my domain,' said Gandhi. 'The world does not hunger for shastras [scriptures]. What it craves, and will always crave, is sincere action.'[3] When he wrote, it was often to answer letters, inquiries, a journalist's question, or because he wanted to address a dilemma. As a consequence, he often repeated himself and was sometimes inconsistent. This bothered him not the slightest. He warned: 'I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. . . . Therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine . . . choose the later of the two on the same subject.'[4]

I lay claim to nothing exclusively divine in me. I do not claim prophetship. I am but a humble seeker after Truth and bent upon finding it. I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical is directed to that end. And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in them. Thus I am no master, I am but a struggling, erring, humble servant of India and, therethrough, of humanity.

Young India, 11 September 1924

I have never claimed to be a messenger of God except in the sense in which all human beings are. I am a mortal as liable to err as any other. Nor have I claimed to be a teacher. But I cannot prevent traducers from calling me all sorts of names and ascribing to me vices to which I am a stranger. I lay both praise and blame at the feet of the Almighty and go my way.

Harijan, 28 October 1939

My preaching and teaching are not emotional or non-practical, for I teach what is ancient and strive to practise what I preach. And I claim that what I practise is capable of being practised by all, because I am a very ordinary

3. *Harijan*, 3 March 1946.
4. *Harijan*, 23 April 1933, in Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, edited by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, 1995), p. 4.

mortal, open to the same temptations and liable to the same weaknesses as the least among us.

Young India, 15 December 1927

I may not carry my argument any further. Language at best is but a poor vehicle for expressing one's thoughts in full. For me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life. I know I fail often, sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart. True guidance comes by constant waiting upon God, by utmost humility, self-abnegation, by being ever ready to sacrifice one's self. Its practice requires fearlessness and courage of the highest order. I am painfully aware of my failings.

Young India, 13 September 1928

After I am gone, no single person will be able completely to represent me. But a little bit of me will live in many of you. If each puts the cause first and himself last, the vacuum will to a large extent be filled.

Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958),
Vol. 2, p. 782

The following discussion took place before the opening of the San Francisco conference, convened in April 1945, for purposes of founding the new organization that would become the United Nations. Gandhi had been asked: 'If you were at San Francisco, what would you be advocating there?'[5]

If I knew I would tell you but I am made differently. When I face a situation, the solution comes to me. I am not a man who sits down and thinks out problems syllogistically. I am a man of action. I react to a situation intuitively. Logic comes afterwards, it does not precede the event. The moment I am at the Peace Conference, I know the right word will come. But not before hand. This much, however, I can say: that whatever I say there will be in terms of peace, not war.

Interview with Ralph Coniston, Pyarelal,[6]
Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1956),
Vol. 1, pp. 113–16

5. Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), Vol. 2, p. 502.
6. Pyarelal, a journalist, worked closely with Gandhi, and helped to edit his papers.

I am but a poor, struggling soul, yearning to be wholly good, wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed, but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true. It is a painful climb, but the pain of it is a positive pleasure to me. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next.

Young India, 9 April 1925

My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents, and I lay them both at His feet. Why should He have chosen me, an imperfect instrument, for such a mighty experiment? I think He deliberately did so. He had to serve the poor dumb [mute] ignorant millions. A perfect man might have been their despair. When they found that one with their failings was marching on towards *ahimsa*, they too had confidence in their own capacity. We should not have recognized a perfect man if he had come as our leader, and we might have driven him to a cave. Maybe he who follows me will be more perfect and you will be able to receive his message.

Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*,
op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 801

Somehow or other I dread a visit to Europe and America. Not that I distrust the peoples of these great continents any more than I distrust my own, but I distrust myself. I have no desire to go to the West in search of health or for sightseeing. I have no desire to deliver public speeches. I detest being lionized. I wonder if I shall ever again have the health to stand the awful strain of public speaking and public demonstrations. If God ever sent me to the West, I should go there to penetrate the hearts of the masses, to have quiet talks with the youth of the West and have the privilege of meeting kindred spirits – lovers of peace at any price save that of truth.

D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*
(Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D. G. Tendulkar, 8 vols., 1951–54),
Vol. 2, p. 417

When I think of my littleness and my limitations on the one hand and of the expectations raised about me on the other, I become dazed for the moment, but I come to myself as soon as I realize that these expectations are a tribute not to me, a curious mixture of Jekyll and Hyde, but to the incarnation, however imperfect but comparatively great in me, of the two priceless qualities of truth and non-violence.

Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*
[hereafter *CWMG*], edited by K. Swaminathan
(New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,
Government of India, 100 vols., 1958–94), Vol. 28, p. 303

New Delhi, 20 October 1947

Perhaps you don't know that I greatly value people who abuse me. Thereby their anger is spent and their hearts are cleansed. I like such critics a thousand times better than those who worship me, applaud me, but at the same time commit murders and disregard what I say. For those who abuse me are candid and if I can convince them they work wonders. In my life I have often had such experience.

Note to Manu Gandhi (originally written in Gujarati, later translated into English), *CWMG*, op. cit., Vol. 89, p. 367; Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 3: *Non-violent Resistance and Social Transformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 551

If I was a perfect man, I own, I should not feel the miseries of neighbours as I do. As a perfect man I should take note of them, prescribe a remedy, and compel adoption by the force of unchallengeable Truth in me. But as yet I only see as through a glass darkly and therefore have to carry conviction by slow and laborious processes, and then, too, not always with success. . . . I would be less human if, with all my knowledge of avoidable misery pervading the land . . . I did not feel with and for all the suffering of the dumb [silent] millions of India.

My soul refuses to be satisfied so long as it is a helpless witness of a single wrong or a single misery. But it is not possible for me, a weak, frail, miserable being, to mend every wrong or to hold myself free of blame for all the wrong I see. The spirit in me pulls one way, the flesh in me pulls in the opposite direction. There is freedom from the action of these two forces but that freedom is attainable only by slow and painful stages. I cannot attain freedom by a mechanical refusal to act, but only by intelligent action in a detached manner.

Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 324

I do not want the peace of the grave

I am a man of peace, I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in stone; I do not want the peace that you find in the grave; but I do want that peace which you find embedded in the human breast, which is exposed to the arrows of the whole world but which is protected from all harm by the power of the Almighty God.

Young India, 19 January 1922

I flatter myself with the belief that some of my writings will survive me and will be of service to the causes for which they have been written.

Harijan, 27 May 1939

Out of my ashes a thousand Gandhis will arise
Faizpur, 26 December 1936

> What new message can I give you at the age of 68? And where is the use of my giving you a message if you pass a resolution there of assassinating me or burning my effigy? Assassinating the body of course does not matter, for out of my ashes a thousand Gandhis will arise. But what if you assassinate or burn the principles I have lived for?
>
> 'Message to Students', *Harijan*, 16 January 1937

> I have never made a fetish of consistency. I am a votary of Truth, and I must say what I feel and think at a given moment on the question, without regard to what I may have said before on it. It is for the reader to find out how far my present views coincide with those formerly expressed. Wherever he finds that what I have said or written before runs contrary to what I am writing now, he should without hesitation reject the former. As my vision gets clearer, my views must grow clearer with daily practice. Where I have deliberately altered an opinion, the change should be obvious. Only a careful eye would notice a gradual and imperceptible evolution.
>
> *Harijan*, 28 September 1934

> Without any elaborate scheme I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal principles of truth and non-violence to our daily life and problems. Like a child I did whatever occurred to me on the spur of the moment during the course of events.
>
> Speech at Gandhi Seva Sargh Meeting
> (originally in Hindi, later translated into English),
> in *CWMG*, op. cit., Vol. 62, p. 224

King on Gandhi

No Baptist minister would feel compunction about repeating a message. Preaching is often repetitive; moreover, reiteration is a conscious technique used by preachers or speakers especially when trying to communicate something complicated. Repetition in oration is not redundancy – as considered in writing – but a form of emphasis. As a consequence, more than once King uses the same phrase, and he frequently makes the same point in slightly different words or uses identical words. When it came to the subject of Gandhi, King often repeated himself, stressing the significance of the Mahatma and the Indian campaigns. He often mentioned Gandhi as a guiding force in his thinking, and used the tool of repetition to reinforce the importance of the Indian leader's example for African-Americans.

> Prior to coming to Montgomery I had read most of the major works on Gandhi and also Thoreau's essay on 'Civil Disobedience.' Both of these

strains of thought had profound influence on my thinking. I firmly believe that the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolent resistance is the only logical and moral approach to the solution of the race problem in the United States.

King, in a letter to George Hendrick,[7] 5 February 1957,
Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University,
Boston, Massachusetts

Well, I would say that I owe a great deal to Mahatma Gandhi for my own commitment to nonviolence, I would say that we gained the operative technique for this movement from the great movement that took place in India. Now, of course, there are differences and we recognize these differences. We are in a different cultural situation. The Indian people constituted a numerical majority seeking to gain freedom in a situation where a numerical minority ruled, where in the United States we are a numerical minority. Also there is a distinction between integration and independence. On the one hand a foreign invader is being driven out, in America we are seeking to gain freedom within a situation where we will have to live with the same people the minute we get that freedom, and so there are differences, but I think that the basic philosophy itself, the basic method, is the same and that is that it is possible to stand up against an unjust system resistive with determination and yet not stoop to violence and hatred in the process.

King, National Press Club luncheon, 22 August 1962,
Washington, D.C., audio transcription

It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love. As the days unfolded, however, the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi began to exert its influence. I had come to see early that the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to the Negro in his struggle for freedom. About a week after the protest started, a white woman who understood and sympathized with the Negroes' efforts wrote a letter to the editor of the *Montgomery Advisor* comparing the bus protest with the Gandhian movement in India. Miss Juliette Morgan, sensitive and frail, did not long survive the rejection and condemnation of the white community, but long before she died in the summer of 1957 the name of Mahatma Gandhi was well-known in Montgomery. People who had never known the little brown saint of India were now saying his name with familiarity. Nonviolent resistance had emerged as the technique of the

7. Professor George Hendrick, born in Stephenville, Texas, in 1929, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Thoreau, Gandhi, civil disobedience and *satyagraha*.

movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method.

King, *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*
(New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 84–5

Gandhi's principle of resistance

Mahatma Gandhi has done more than any other person in history to reveal that social problems can be solved without resorting to primitive methods of violence. In this sense he is more than a saint of India. He belongs – as they said of Abraham Lincoln – to the ages.

In our struggle against racial segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, I came to see at a very early stage that a synthesis of Gandhi's method of nonviolence and the Christian ethics of love is the best weapon available to Negroes for this struggle for freedom and human dignity. It may well be that the Gandhian approach will bring about a solution to the race problem in America. His spirit is a continual reminder to oppressed people that it is possible to resist evil and yet not resort to violence.

The Gandhian influence in some way still speaks to the conscience of the world as nations grapple with international problems. If we fail on an international scale to follow the Gandhian principle of nonviolence, we may end up by destroying ourselves through the misuse of our own instruments. . . .

[Gandhi] would resist evil as much as the man who uses violence, but he resists it without external violence or violence of the spirit. That is what Gandhism does. If the only alternative is between cowardice and violence, it is better – as Gandhi said – to use violence, but there is that other way.

I myself gained this insight from Gandhi. When I was in the theological school I thought the only way we could solve our problem of segregation was an armed revolt. I felt that the Christian ethics of love were confined to individual relationships, I could not see how it could work in social conflicts.

Then I read Gandhi's ethics of love as revealed in Jesus but raised to a social strategy for social transformation. This lifts love from individual relationships to the place of social transformation. This Gandhi helped us to understand and for this we are grateful a decade after his death.

King, 'His Influence Speaks to World Conscience',
Hindustan Times, 30 January 1958

I was delighted that the Gandhians accepted us with open arms. They praised our experiment with the nonviolent resistance technique at Montgomery. They seem to look upon it as an outstanding example of the possibilities of its use in western civilization. To them as to me it also

suggests that nonviolent resistance *when planned and positive in action* can work effectively even under totalitarian regimes.

King, 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi',
Ebony, July 1959

I left India more convinced than ever before that the method of nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and dignity. In fact, there is no other lasting way. I have returned to America with a greater determination to achieve freedom for my people through nonviolent means.

King to G. Ramachandran, 19 May 1959,
letter in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers,
Boston University, Boston

King delivered this sermon at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, linking nonviolence with the recognition of Ghana as a new nation by the United Kingdom, the history of Africa, and black people in the United States. He also explained nonviolence as the foundation for many of Jesus' parables.

If there had not been a Gandhi in India with all of his noble followers, India would have never been free. If there had not been a Nkrumah and his followers in Ghana, Ghana would still be a British colony. If there had not been abolitionists in America, both Negro and white, we might still stand today in the dungeons of slavery. . . . In every period there are always those people in every period of human history who don't mind getting their necks cut off, who don't mind being persecuted and discriminated and kicked about, because they know that freedom is never given out, but it comes through the persistent and the continual agitation and revolt on the part of those who are caught in the system! Ghana teaches us that. It says to us another thing. It reminds us of the fact that a nation or a people can break aloose from oppression without violence. Nkrumah says in the first two pages of his autobiography . . . that he had studied the social systems of social philosophy and he started studying the life of Gandhi and his technique. And he said that in the beginning he could not see how they could ever get aloose from colonialism without armed revolt, without armies and ammunition, rising up, then he says after he continued to study Gandhi and continued to study this technique, he came to see that the only way was through nonviolent positive action. And he called his program 'positive action.'

King, 'The Birth of a New Nation',
sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church,
King Library and Archives,
Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

Gandhi on Thoreau and other influences

A sojourn in England, familiarity with Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence and extensive reading in varied fields diminished Gandhi's initial awe of the British. Such encounters enabled him to deal with the British colonial authorities as an equal. Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy influenced the formulation of his ideas. They emboldened his thinking. Their issues were also his concerns – wealth and poverty, labor, Truth, and the duty to disavow and resist tyrannical and immoral ways. These concerns, and Gandhi's investigations based on sources closer to home, strengthened him to experiment and to act on the emotional stirrings he felt. They became interwoven in his all-encompassing understanding of human psychology and the nature of power.

You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa. Great Britain gave me Ruskin, whose *Unto This Last* transformed me overnight from a lawyer and city dweller into a rustic living away from Durban on a farm, three miles from the nearest railway station; and Russia gave me in Tolstoy a teacher who furnished a reasoned basis for my non-violence. Tolstoy blessed my movement in South Africa when it was still in its infancy and of whose wonderful possibilities I had yet to learn. It was he who had prophesied in his letter to me that I was leading a movement which was destined to bring a message of hope to the downtrodden people of the earth. So you will see that I have not approached the present task in any spirit of enmity to Great Britain and the West. After having imbibed and assimilated the message of *Unto This Last*, I could not be guilty of approving fascism or Nazism, whose cult is suppression of the individual and his liberty.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,*
op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 177

What then is the meaning of non-co-operation in terms of the Law of Suffering? We must voluntarily put up with the losses and inconveniences that arise from having to withdraw our support from a government that is ruling against our will. Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust government; poverty in that case is a virtue, says Thoreau. It may be that in the transition state we may make mistakes; there may be avoidable suffering. These things are preferable to national emasculation.

Young India, 16 June 1920

Henry S. Salt, Esq., Brighton, England
Camp Hardol, 12 October 1929

Dear Friend,

I was agreeably surprised to receive your letter. Yes, indeed your book which was the first English book I came across on vegetarianism was of immense

help to me in steadying my faith in vegetarianism. My first introduction to Thoreau's writings was I think in 1907 or later when I was in the thick of passive resistance struggle. A friend sent me Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. It left a deep impression upon me. I translated a portion of that essay for the readers of *Indian Opinion* in South Africa which I was then editing and I made copious extracts from that essay for that paper. That essay seemed to be so convincing and truthful that I felt the need of knowing more of Thoreau and I came across your life of him, his 'Walden' and other short essays all of which I read with great pleasure and equal profit.
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Letter to Henry S. Salt,[8]
in *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 41, p. 553

The following description of Thoreau, including extracts chosen by Gandhi, was part of Gandhi's effort to educate his readers about civil disobedience.

[Henry] David Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, poet, and withal a most practical man, that is, he taught nothing he was not prepared to practise in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced. At the time of the abolition of slavery movement, he wrote his famous essay 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'. He went to gaol [jail] for the sake of his principles and suffering humanity. His essay has, therefore, been sanctified by suffering. Moreover, it is written for all time. Its inclusive logic is unanswerable; during the last week of October – a month of sore temptation to Asiatic passive resisters, whose silent suffering has now reached the whole civilized world – we present the following extracts from Thoreau's essay. The original occupies a little over thirty pages of a pocket book and has been published by Mr. Arthur C. Fifield of 44 Fleet Street, London, in his beautiful 'Simple Life' series, at 3d.

Extracts from Thoreau's 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'

I heartily accept the motto: 'That government is best which governs least'; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe:

'That government is best which governs not at all'; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

8. Salt was one of Thoreau's biographers. Gandhi and Salt delivered papers at a London conference on vegetarian diets in May 1891, and, almost four decades later, Salt wrote to Gandhi soliciting clarification of Thoreau's impact on him. George Hendrick, *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 110–11.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it.

'For Passive Resisters', *Indian Opinion*, 26 October 1907

The law and conscience

For the most part, satyagraha is 'evil resistance' and 'civil assistance'. But sometimes it has to be 'civil resistance'. Here I must call to my assistance another illustrious countryman of Pennsylvania, Henry Thoreau. He asks:

'Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislators?'

He answers:

'I think that we should be men first and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right.' I think that the position taken up by Thoreau is unassailable. The only question is that of the remedy to be applied for vindicating the rights of conscience. The remedy in vogue is that of inflicting violence on those who wish to wound your conscience. Thoreau in his immortal essay shows that civil disobedience, not violence, is the true remedy.

Letter to *The Times of India*, 22 August 1919;
reproduced in *Young India*, 23 August 1919

It is possible to carry the doctrine of passive resistance too far, but it is equally so with reference to the doctrine of obedience to law. We cannot give the dividing line in words more appropriate than those of Thoreau when, speaking of the American Government, he says:

'If one were to tell me that this was a bad Government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make any ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have friction, and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But, when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are paramount, I say let us not have any such machine any longer.'

Indian Opinion, 7 September 1907

The University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 29 January 1937

Dear Kalidas Nag,

I have your letter written on the boat taking you to Honolulu. I have no inspiring message to give to anybody if non-violence is not its own message. But I can state my own experience of nearly fifty years of practice that

there is no force known to mankind which is equal to non-violence. It cannot, however, be learnt through books. It has got to be lived.

You ask me to mention books. For the reason just stated it is difficult to single out books purely dedicated to an exposition of non-violence. Richard Gregg's *Power of Non-violence* may be studied with advantage. Tolstoy's later writings are also aids to a contemplation of non-violence.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Letter to Kalidas Nag, Pyarelal Papers;
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 64, p. 325

Ashram, Sabarmati, 11 March 1926

Dear Friend,

There is no doubt about it that Tolstoy's writings had a powerful effect on me. He strengthened my love of non-violence. He enabled me to see things more clearly than I had done before. His manner of putting this is all his own. At the same time I know that there were fundamental differences between us and though they will abide, they are of little consequence compared with so many things for which I shall feel ever grateful to him.

Yours sincerely,
MKG

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 30, p. 102

King on Thoreau and other influences

Henry David Thoreau struck a chord in King on his first reading. His captivation by Thoreau, and Thoreau's influence, can easily be discerned throughout the length and breadth of King's writings and speeches. Indeed, the question of the individual's relationship with the government – the degree of deference or obedience to the state – remains at the heart of many present-day conflicts. Virtually all popular movements bear some debt to Thoreau. King and the American civil rights movement were no exception.

A legacy of creative protest

During my early college days I read Thoreau's essays on civil disobedience for the first time. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I re-read the work several times. I became deeply convinced then that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting his idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest. It goes without saying that the teachings of Thoreau are alive today, indeed, they are more alive today than ever before. Whether expressed in a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride to Mississippi, a peaceful protest in Albany, Georgia, a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama,

it is an outgrowth of Thoreau's insistence that evil must be resisted and no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.

'Thoreau: A Centenary Gathering', *Massachusetts Review,*
Autumn 1962 (Tribute to Henry David Thoreau)

In order to protect ourselves from anarchy we do not say, 'Defy the law', we do not say, 'Evade the law', we say that these laws are to be disagreed with or even broken openly and they are to be done publicly, they are to be done, they are to be broken nonviolently and, I submit, that any individual who comes to the point that he has to break a law that his conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty for it is, at that moment, expressing the very highest respect for our law and we are not practicing anarchy, we are merely saying that there are some laws unjust and the only way to call this to the attention of the community is to break them and suffer the penalty by staying in jail if necessary.

King, question-and-answer session,
National Press Club luncheon, 22 August 1962,
Washington, D.C.

Gandhi and the African-Americans

For approximately three decades prior to the Montgomery bus boycott, African-American educators, journalists and religious leaders had been traveling to India to meet with Gandhi. Acutely attuned to the analogies between their own predicament and the Indian struggle for independence, some talked about raising up a 'Negro Gandhi' in the United States.

Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grandchildren of the slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slaveowners. But let us not think of honour or dishonour in connection with the past. Let us realise that the future is with those who would be truthful, pure and loving. For, as the old wise men have said, truth ever is, untruth never was. Love alone binds and truth and love accrue only to the truly humble.

Gandhi, 'To the American Negro. A Message from
Mahatma Gandhi', *Crisis,* Vol. 36 (July 1929), p. 225[9]

9. The eminent social thinker W. E. B. DuBois was among the founders of the NAACP and edited its organ, *The Crisis*, a channel for creative intellectual inquiry and indignation for fifty years. When this message appeared, dated 1 May 1929, the cover of the journal carried the banner 'A Message from Gandhi'. Two years later, DuBois again urged Gandhi to send words of encouragement for African-Americans who, DuBois wrote, 'were tremendously interested at the effort of the Indian people to achieve independence and self-government'. See Du Bois's letter of 30 October 1931 to Gandhi, W. E. B. DuBois Papers, Widener Library, Harvard University, microfilm reel 36, frame 51.

Discussion with Dr Dodd[10]

14 September 1934

Dr Dodd: I have come to India, 10,000 miles, to see Taj which is a monument of the past and Mahatma Gandhi which is a symbol of the future.

Gandhiji: But why not become a living Taj than a dead Taj? And why not a monument of the present than of the future?

Dr Dodd: Is there any chance of your coming to America? Could we kidnap you to America? We hear, you know, so much of kidnappers nowadays.

Gandhiji: No, for the simple reason that I should be of no use there. If I came there, it would be to demonstrate the secret and the beauty and the power of non-violence. I should not be able to do it today. I have not yet carried complete conviction to my own countrymen.

The main objective is obvious and it is to gain independence, not for the literate and the rich in India, but for the dumb [silent] millions.

Dr Dodd: I know. I have often come across that expression in your writings. What are your methods?

Gandhiji: Not many methods, but the one method of unadulterated truth and non-violence. But you might ask me, 'How are non-violence and truth expressed and applied?' I would say at once that the central fact in my programme is the spinning-wheel. I know that Americans are startled when I say this. What can be the meaning of this pet obsession, they ask.

Dr Dodd: Not all Americans. Our daily paper one day criticized the spinning-wheel programme and in the very next column had an article describing people working with the shovel on a public thoroughfare, forty doing the work of a single machine. In a letter to the editor, I drew his attention to the incongruity and told him that, just as we were fighting unemployment, India, too, was fighting unemployment. But with you, Mr Gandhi, it is a moral and spiritual symbol, too?

Gandhiji: Yes, of truth and non-violence. When as a nation we adopt the spinning-wheel, we not only solve the question of unemployment but we declare that we have no intention of exploiting any nation, and we also end the exploitation of the poor by the rich. It is a spiritual force which in the initial stages works slowly, but as soon as it gets started, it begins working in geometrical progression, that is, when it gets into the life of the people. When I say I want independence for the millions, I mean to say not only that the millions may have something to eat and to cover themselves with, but that they will be free from the exploitation of people here and outside. We can never industrialize India, unless, of course, we reduce our population from 350 million to 35 million or hit upon markets wider than our own and dependent on us. It is time we realized that, where there is unlimited human power, complicated machinery on a large scale has no place. An

10. Dodd was in charge of a girls' college in the United States.

Indian economist told me once that every American had 36 slaves, for, the machine did the work of 36 slaves. Well, Americans may need that, but not we. We cannot industrialize ourselves, unless we make up our minds to enslave humanity.

Then, we have to fight untouchability. Untouchability of a kind is everywhere. A coal porter coming from a coal mine would not stretch out his hand to shake yours. He would say he would wash himself clean first. But the moment a man has rendered himself clean, he should cease to be untouchable. Here however we have regarded a part of our population as perpetually untouchable. We are trying to abolish that untouchability. Added to their untouchability is unemployment, which they share in common with a vast number of others. You, too, have got the unemployment problem, but it is of your own creation. Our unemployment is not entirely of our creation, but, however it came about, I am sure that, if my method was universalized in India, we should not only find work for those that exist but for those to come. That is, we should easily be able to tackle our population problem. The problem is to double the penny a day which is the average income of a poor Indian. If we can achieve that, it would be quite enough at least till we find a better method. The spinning-wheel, by utilizing the idle hours of the nation, produces additional wealth; it does not, it was never meant to, displace existing employment. Give me a thing which would increase the daily income of the millions of our impoverished people more than the spinning-wheel, and I should gladly give up the spinning-wheel.

Dr Dodd: I quite see. We talk of shortening of the hours of work, but as to what they are to do in their spare hours, we do not seem for a moment to trouble ourselves about.

I would ask one more question, Mr Gandhi. I have the opportunity of speaking to many young men and women and I should like you to tell me what you consider your most satisfactory achievement – I will not say your greatest achievement, lest I should embarrass you. In other words, what should I put before the young people as a thing that they should aspire after in life?

Gandhiji: It is a difficult question. I do not know what to say, I can simply say this: I do not know whether you will call it an achievement or not, but I may say that, in the midst of humiliation and so-called defeat and a tempestuous life, I am able to retain my peace, because of an undying faith in God, translated as Truth. We can describe God as millions of things, but I have for myself adopted the simple formula – 'Truth is God.'

Dr Dodd: I see it, I see it. You have achieved peace in a world of confusion and turmoil.

Gandhiji: But several American friends say to me, 'You cannot have peace unless you believe in Jesus.' Well, I tell you I have peace, though I do not believe in Jesus as the only son of God.

Dr Dodd: I am glad you said this. May I ask you to let me know your conception of Christ?

Gandhiji: I consider him as a historical person – one of the greatest amongst the teachers of mankind. I have studied his teachings as prayerfully as I could, with the reverence of a Christian, in order to discover the Truth that is buried in them. I have done so, just as I have done about the teachings of other teachers. . . .

Dr Dodd: What is the source of your ideals?

Gandhiji: The source is truth or the uttermost identity with all life. Truth is the realization of God.

Dr Dodd: One last thing, Mr Gandhi. I am coming from the Congress of the Baptist Christians in Germany. They took a firm stand on peace and racialism. I spoke there on the 'Gospel of the Day' and spoke 'on strict honesty and integrity in the business of our life' and 'war as the most insane and unchristian thing on earth.' I made, in conclusion, an appeal to all, coupled with my own declaration, that true Christians everywhere should refuse to shoot down their Christian brethren whenever Governments decided to go to war against any other nation. How much does that proposition come near you?

Gandhiji: It would come very near me, if you were to drop out the word 'Christian' and said only 'brethren.' I should refuse to shoot down any human being, black or white, Christian or non-Christian. Your declaration must apply to the whole humanity.

Dr Dodd: I mean it. I said 'Christian brethren', as I was addressing a group of Christians.

Gandhiji: That is all right. I have to give this warning, because sometimes it is thought that there is nothing wrong in shooting down so-called savages.

Dr Dodd: No, no.

'A Talk with an American Friend', *Harijan*, 11 September 1934

Interview with an African-American delegation[11]

21 February 1936

Gandhiji: Is the prejudice against colour growing or dying out?

Dr Thurman:[12] It is difficult to say because in one place things look much improved, whilst in another the outlook is still dark. Among many of the southern white students there is a disposition to improve upon the attitude of their forbears, and the migration occasioned by the World War did contribute appreciably to break down the barriers. But the economic question is acute everywhere, and in many of the industrial centres in the Middle West the

11. This appeared under the title 'With Our Negro Guests', in C. B. Dalal (ed.), *Gandhi: 1915–48, A Detailed Chronology,* 1st ed. (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, in collaboration with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1971).

12. Professor of comparative religion and philosophy Howard Thurman was then dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University, in Washington, D.C.

prejudice against the Negro shows itself in its ugliest form. Among the masses of workers there is a great amount of tension, which is quite natural when the white thinks that the Negro's very existence is a threat to his own.

Gandhiji: Is the union between Negroes and the whites recognized by law?

Carroll:[13] Twenty-five States have laws definitely against these unions, and I have had to sign a bond of 500 dollars to promise that I would not register any such union.

Dr Thurman: But there has been a lot of intermixture of races as for 300 years or more the Negro woman had no control over her body. . . . Did the South African Negro take any part in your movement?

Gandhiji: No, I purposely did not invite them. It would have endangered their cause. They would not have understood the technique of our struggle nor could they have seen the purpose or utility of non-violence.

This led to a discussion of Christianity as practiced by South African blacks. Gandhi explained why Islam had scored against Christianity there. 'We are often told', said Dr Thurman, 'that but for the Arabs there would have been no slavery. I do not believe it.'

Gandhiji: No, it is not true at all. For, the moment a slave accepts Islam he obtains equality with his master, and there are several instances of this in history.

The discussion led to a period of cross-questioning. The guests saw Gandhi's principle of respect for all religions and that this was no theoretical calculation but a reality. 'Is non-violence from your point of view a form of direct action?' queried Dr Thurman.

Gandhiji: It is not one form, it is the only form. I do not of course confine the words 'direct action' to their technical meaning. But without a direct active expression of it, non-violence to my mind is meaningless. It is the greatest and the activest force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent. In fact 'non-violence' is a term I had to coin in order to bring out the root meaning of *ahimsa*. In spite of the negative particle 'non', it is no negative force. Superficially we are surrounded in life by strife and bloodshed, life living upon life. But some great seer, who ages ago penetrated the centre of truth, said: 'It is not through strife and violence, but through non-violence that man can fulfil his destiny and his duty to his fellow creatures.' It is a force which is more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether. At the centre of non-violence is a force which is self-acting.

13. The Reverend Edward G. Carroll, subsequently bishop of the Boston area of the United Methodist Church.

Ahimsa means 'love' in the Pauline sense, and yet something more than the 'love' defined by St Paul, although I know St Paul's beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes. *Ahimsa* includes the whole creation, and not only human. Besides, love in the English language has other connotations too, and so I was compelled to use the negative word. But it does not, as I have told you, express a negative force, but a force superior to all the forces put together. One person who can express *ahimsa* in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality.

Question: And is it possible for any individual to achieve this?

Gandhiji: Certainly. If there was any exclusiveness about it, I should reject it at once.

Question: Any idea of possession is foreign to it?

Gandhiji: Yes. It possesses nothing, therefore it possesses everything.

Question: Is it possible for a single human being to resist the persistent invasion of the quality successfully?

Gandhiji: It is possible. Perhaps your question is more universal than you mean. Isn't it possible, you mean to ask, for one single Indian for instance to resist the exploitation of 300 million Indians? Or do you mean the onslaught of the whole world against a single individual personality?

Dr Thurman: Yes, that is one half of the question. I wanted to know if one man can hold the whole of violence at bay?

Gandhiji: If he cannot, you must take it that he is not a true representative of *ahimsa*. Supposing I cannot produce a single instance in life of a man who truly converted his adversary, I would then say that is because no one had yet been found to express *ahimsa* in its fullness.

Question: Then it overrides all other forces?

Gandhiji: Yes, it is the only true force in life.

Dr Thurman: Forgive the weakness, but may I ask how are we to train individuals or communities in this difficult art?

Gandhiji: There is no royal road, except through living the creed in your life which must be a living sermon. Of course the expression in one's own life presupposes great study, tremendous perseverance, and thorough cleansing of one's self of all the impurities. If for mastering of the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force that mankind has known? But why worry even if it means several lifetimes? For if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it is well spent. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else shall be added unto you. The Kingdom of Heaven is *ahimsa*.

Mrs Thurman: How am I to act, supposing my own brother was lynched before my very eyes?

Gandhiji: There is such a thing as self-immolation. Supposing I was a Negro, and my sister was ravished by a white or lynched by a whole community, what would be my duty? – I ask myself. And the answer comes to me: I must

not wish ill to these, but neither must I co-operate with them. It may be that ordinarily I depend on the lynching community for my livelihood. I refuse to co-operate with them, refuse even to touch the food that comes from them, and I refuse to co-operate with even my brother Negroes who tolerate the wrong. That is the self-immolation I mean. I have often in my life resorted to the plan. Of course a mechanical act of starvation will mean nothing. One's faith must remain undimmed whilst life ebbs out minute by minute. But I am a very poor specimen of the practice of non-violence, and my answer may not convince you. But I am striving very hard, and even if I do not succeed fully in the life, my faith will not diminish.

The guests asked Gandhi to visit the United States.

Mrs Thurman: We want you not for white America, but for the Negroes; we have many a problem that cries for solution, and we need you badly.

Gandhiji: How I wish I could, but I would have nothing to give you unless I had given an ocular demonstration here of all that I have been saying. I must make good the message here before I bring it to you. I do not say that I am defeated, but I have still to perfect myself. You may be sure that the moment I feel the call within me I shall not hesitate.

Dr Thurman: Much of the peculiar background of our own life in America is our own interpretation of the Christian religion. When one goes through the pages of the hundreds of Negro spirituals, striking things are brought to my mind which remind me of all that you have told us today.

Gandhiji: Well, if it comes true it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world.

Harijan, 14 March 1936

Morehouse College president Benjamin E. Mays often mentioned his trip to India at the college's Tuesday morning chapel. Following is an account of Mays's meeting with Gandhi, written by Gandhi's secretary, which took place sometime before 10 January 1937.

Gandhiji: Passive resistance is a misnomer for non-violent resistance. It is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct, ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility it seems to be ineffective, for example, the spinning-wheel which I have called the symbol of non-violence. In its visibility it appears ineffective, but it is really intensely active and most effective in ultimate result. This knowledge enables me to detect flaws in the way in which the votaries of non-violence are doing their spinning. I ask for more vigilance and more untiredness. Non-violence is an intensely active force when properly understood and used. A violent man's activity is most visible while it lasts. But it is always transitory. What can be more visible than the Abyssinians [Ethiopians] done to death by

Italians? There it was lesser violence pitted against much greater. But if the Abyssinians had retired from the field and allowed themselves to be slaughtered, their seeming inactivity would have been much more effective though not for the moment visible. Hitler and Mussolini on the one hand and Stalin on the other are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. But it will be as transitory as that of Jhenghis's slaughter. But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practised, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, 'a miracle has happened.' All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible forces. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective.

Prof. Mays: I have no doubt in my mind about the superiority of non-violence but the thing that bothers me is about its exercise on a large scale, the difficulty of so disciplining the mass mind on the point of love. It is easier to discipline individuals. What should be the strategy when they break out? Do we retreat or do we go on?

Gandhiji: I have had that experience in the course of our movement here. People do not gain the training by preaching. Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised. The practice of violence can be taught to people by outward symbols. You shoot at boards, then at targets, then at beasts. Then you are passed as an expert in the art of destruction. The non-violent man has no outward weapon and, therefore, not only his speech but his action also seems ineffective. I may say all kinds of sweet words to you without meaning them. On the other hand I may have real love in me and yet my outward expression may be forbidding. Then outwardly my action in both cases may be the same and yet the effect may be different. For the effect of our action is often more potent when it is not patently known. Thus the unconscious effect you are making on me I may never know. It is, nevertheless, infinitely greater than the conscious effect. In violence there is nothing invisible. Non-violence, on the other hand, is three-fourths invisible, so the effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility. Non-violence, when it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle. So the mass mind is affected first unconsciously, then consciously. When it becomes consciously affected there is demonstrable victory. In my own experience, when people seemed to be weakening there was no consciousness of defeat in me. Thus I was fuller of hope in the efficacy of non-violence after the renunciation of Civil Disobedience in 1922, and today I continue to be in the same hopeful mood. It is not a mere emotional thing. Supposing I saw no signs of dawn coming I should not lose faith. Everything has to come in its proper time.

I have discussions here with my co-workers about the scavenging work we are doing. 'Why can't we do it after *swaraj*?' they say. 'We may do it better after *swaraj.*' I say to them, 'No. The reform has to come today,

it must not wait for *swaraj*; in fact the right type of *swaraj* will come only out of such work.' Now I cannot show you, as perhaps I cannot show some of my co-workers, the connection between *swaraj* and scavenging. If I have to win *swaraj* non-violently I must discipline my people. The maimed and the blind and the leprous cannot join the army of violence. There is also an age-limit for serving in the army. For a non-violent struggle there is no age-limit; the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden may serve, and not only men but women also. When the spirit of non-violence pervades the people and actually begins to work, its effect is visible to all.

But now comes your poser. There are people, you say, who do not believe in non-violence as you do. Are you to sit quiet? The friends ask: 'If not now, when will you act?' I say in reply: 'I may not succeed in my lifetime, but my faith that victory can only come through non-violence is stronger than ever.' When I spoke on the cult of the spinning-wheel at Faizpur a newspaper correspondent imputed astuteness to me. Nothing could be further from my mind. When I came to Segaon I was told the people might not co-operate and might even boycott me.

I said: 'That may be. But this is the way non-violence works.' If I go to a village which is still farther off, the experiment may work better. This thing has come in my search after the technique of non-violence. And each day that passes makes my faith brighter. I have come here to bring that faith to fruition and to die in the process if that is God's will. Non-violence to be worth anything has to work in the face of hostile forces. But there may be action in inaction. And action may be worse than inaction.

Prof. Mays: Is it ever possible to administer violence in a spirit of love?

Gandhiji: No. Never. I shall give you an illustration from my own experiment. A calf was lame and had developed terrible sores; he could not eat and breathed with difficulty. After three days' argument with myself and my co-workers I put an end to its life. Now that action was non-violent because it was wholly unselfish, inasmuch as the sole purpose was to achieve the calf's relief from pain. Some people have called this an act of violence. I have called it a surgical operation. I should do exactly the same thing with my child, if he were in the same predicament. My point is that non-violence as the supreme law of our being ceases to be such the moment you talk of exceptions.

Prof. Mays: How is a minority to act against an overwhelming majority?

Gandhiji: I would say that a minority can do much more in the way of non-violence than a majority. I had an English friend called Symonds. He used to say: 'I am with you so long as you are in a minority. After you are in a majority we are quits.' I had less diffidence in handling a majority. But it would be wholly wrong therefore to say that non-violence is a weapon of the weak. The use of non-violence requires greater bravery than that of violence. When Daniel defied the laws of the Meads [Medes] and Persians, his action was non-violent.

Prof. Mays: Should the thought of consequences that might accrue to the enemy as a result of your non-violence at all constrain you?

Gandhiji: Certainly. You may have to suspend your movement as did I in South Africa when the Government was faced with the revolt of European labour. The latter asked me to make common cause with them. I said 'no.'

Prof. Mays: And non-violence will never rebound on you, whereas violence will be self-destroyed?

Gandhiji: Yes. Violence must beget violence. But let me tell you that here too my argument has been countered by a great man who said: 'Look at the history of non-violence. Jesus died on the Cross, but his followers shed blood.' This proves nothing. We have no data before us to pass judgment. We do not know the whole of the life of Jesus. The followers perhaps had not imbibed fully the message of non-violence. But I must warn you against carrying the impression with you that mine is the final word on non-violence. I know my own limitations. I am but a humble seeker after truth. And all I claim is that every experiment of mine has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. Its use is not restricted to individuals merely but it can be practised on a mass scale.

Harijan, 20 March 1937

Benjamin E. Mays described the same meeting in a lengthy essay for a Howard University journal. Based primarily on his own experiences, he also drew upon C. F. Andrews's book *India and Britain*[14] and the autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru. Apart from its focus on white attitudes toward people of color, Mays's essay focused the attention of his readers on Gandhi's leadership of the Indian freedom struggle. Martin Luther King Jr, then a Morehouse student, might have heard something like the following.

A word about Mahatma Gandhi. The world is too close to him to appraise him adequately. Certainly my knowledge of him is too meager for me to speak of his influence with finality. But I believe that future historians will record among his contributions to India something like the following: 'He did more than any other man to dispel fear from the Indian mind and more than any other to make Indians proud to be Indians.' That the non-violence campaign was a failure, no one has a right to say. All the evidence is not yet in. Time alone will write the final verdict. But the fact that Gandhi and his non-violent campaign have given the Indian masses a new conception of courage, no man can honestly deny. To discipline people to face death, to die, to go to jail for the cause without fear and without

14. C. F. Andrews and E. Stanley Jones were Christian missionaries who stand out in the recollection of James M. Lawson Jr as having a deep comprehension of Gandhi. (Interview, Los Angeles, California, 27 February 1996).

resorting to violence is an achievement of the first magnitude. And when an oppressed race ceases to be afraid, it is free.

Repeating some of the major themes of the continuing African-American appraisal of Gandhi, Mays wrote:

The cardinal principles of non-violence are love and fearlessness. A leading Indian woman told me that before Gandhi came on the scene, the average Indian was very much afraid of a Britisher. Many Indians would run and hide when a British officer appeared. She thinks this is hardly true now. They face him and talk to him as man to man. She gives Gandhi credit for this change of attitude. It is the conviction of a missionary that Gandhi has made the Indian masses proud of their language, has created in them a respect for their culture and has instilled in them a feeling that, 'It's great to be an Indian.' If these observations are true, they will go a long way to gain greater respect for the Indians in the minds of the British and the world.

Benjamin E. Mays, 'The Color Line around the World',
Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 6 (April 1937), p. 141, in Sudarshan Kapur,
Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi
(Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 98

Another account of the interview with Mays

Before the conference began, Mays obtained an interview with Gandhi at the latter's ashram in Wardha. [Channing] Tobias was also present at the meeting. In the ninety minutes they had with Gandhi, Mays asked the Mahatma to define the meaning of non-violence and to explain why the Indian leader had not rid Indian society of the caste system and untouchability. As Gandhi had done a year earlier with the Thurmans and Edward Carroll, so also this time with Mays and Tobias, he differentiated between passive resistance, non-violent resistance, and violent resistance. The Mahatma was convinced that it is through constant practice that non-violence is made 'more effective and inexhaustible'. The miracle of non-violence, like all miracles, he believed, is 'due to the silent and effective working of invisible forces'. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective, Gandhi added, 'a violent man's activity is most visible while it lasts. But it is always transitory'.

Mays agreed with Gandhi about the superiority of non-violence but expressed doubts about its applicability on a large scale. Reflecting on the experiences of the Indian movement, especially the non-cooperation movement, Gandhi suggested that the only way to be effective is through training and practice; 'Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised', he continued. 'Non-violence, when it becomes active, travels with

extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle.' He elaborated his theme thus: 'So the mass mind is affected first unconsciously, then consciously. When it becomes consciously affected there is demonstrable victory.'

'Interview with Professor Benjamin E. Mays', *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 64, pp. 221, 222; see also Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography of Benjamin E. Mays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 156

My life is my message

Mahabaleshwar, India, on or before 30 May 1945

Question: Gandhiji, is there any special message you would care to send to the Negro people of America?

Answer: My life is its own message. If it is not, then nothing I can now write will fulfil the purpose.

When asked to comment on the probable trend of race relations, Gandhi said:

'My faith burns brighter today, even brighter than it has in the past; we are fast approaching a solution to troublesome race problems.'

This he feels will be accomplished in spite of present-day discouraging symptoms. And he still feels that the best weapon for use by under-privileged peoples is non-violence.

Pointing to his recent statement made at the beginning of the San Francisco Conference, he indicated that India's freedom was closely identified with the welfare of all other under-privileged peoples. At that time he had said: 'The freedom of India will demonstrate to all exploited races of the earth that their freedom is very near.'

Interview with Denton J. Brookes,[15] *The Hindu*, 15 June 1945

The African-American dilemma

Gandhi: Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double distilled.

And to illustrate his remark Gandhiji narrated the story of a Negro clergyman with a Herculean frame in South Africa saying 'pardon me brother', when insulted by a white man, and sneaking into a colored man's compartment.

15. Brookes was Far Eastern correspondent of the *Chicago Defender*, in which this interview appeared in June 1945. He reported, 'In the exclusive interview given to me last week, Gandhiji was observing silence, with the exception of an hour after evening prayers. . . . I asked questions and he hurriedly jotted down the answers.'

That is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate.

Louis Fischer: You are not afraid of what happens to you but what it may mean to others. It takes a great deal of irresponsibility to give vent to your feelings and slap the white man under the circumstances described by you. In India the situation is different. The white men are not so numerous here.

Gandhi: You are mistaken. Why, one Englishman is killed and a whole village is razed to the ground as a reprisal. What vindictiveness!

Interview with Louis Fischer, biographer of Gandhi,
Harijan, 4 August 1946

Discussion with African soldiers in Madras[16]

Question: There are several religions in the world. They were all originated in foreign countries. Which one of these should Africa follow? Or should she discover her own religion? If so, how?

Gandhiji: It is wrong to say that all religions were originated in foreign countries. I had fairly extensive contact with Zulus and Bantus and I found that the Africans have a religion of their own, though they may not have reasoned it out for themselves. I am not referring to the rites, ceremonies and fetishes that are prevalent among African tribes but the religion of one Supreme God. You pray to that God. There are many religions, but religion is only one. You should follow that one religion. Foreigners might bring you Christianity. Christianity as exemplified in Europe and America today is a travesty of the teaching of Jesus. Then there are Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and so on. You should absorb the best that is in each without fettering your choice and form your own religion.

Question: How can a continent like Africa fight down the fetters of slavery when it is so hopelessly divided?[17]

Gandhiji: I know your difficulty. If you think of the vast size of Africa, the distance and natural obstacles separating its various parts, the scattered condition of its people and the terrible divisions among them, the task might well appear to be hopeless. But there is a charm which can overcome all these handicaps. The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others.

Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore the first thing is to say to yourself: 'I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience.' The so-called master may lash you and try to force you to

16. Pyarelal remembered that soldiers came from West Africa 'with a long list of questions indicative of the deep stirring in their consciousness'.

17. The soldiers quoted Gandhi, 'To remain in slavery is beneath the dignity of man; a slave who is conscious of his state and yet does not strive to break his chains is lower than the beast'. Pyarelal.

serve him. You will say: 'No, I will not serve you for your money or under a threat.' This may mean suffering. Your readiness to suffer will light the torch of freedom which can never be put out.

Question: Africa and India both drink of the cup of slavery. What necessary steps can be taken to unite the two nations so as to present a common front?

Gandhiji: You are right. India is not yet free and yet Indians have begun to realize that their freedom is coming, not because the white man says so but because they have developed the power within. Inasmuch as India's struggle is non-violent, it is a struggle for the emancipation of all oppressed races against superior might. I do not propose mechanical joint action between them. 'Each one has to find his own salvation' is true of this as well as of the other world. It is enough that there is a real moral bond between Asiatics and Africans. It will grow as time passes.

Question: Everything immoral and deadly is attributed to Africa. What steps should be taken to eradicate the epidemic of foreign prejudice against us?

Gandhiji: In so far as there is a modicum of truth in this criticism, it is no special prerogative of Africa. Immorality and wrong are common in all countries. But you must not allow yourselves to take refuge in self-complacency either, by saying to yourself: 'Well, others are no better than we.' Many, perhaps most of the evils that are at the back of the prejudice against Negroes are the result of nominal Christianity imported from America. They have learnt to drink, dance immoral dances and so on. Then there are evil African customs. You must eradicate these and thus disarm foreign prejudice. It is a laborious task but a joyous one. The epidemic of foreign prejudice will then die a natural death.

They wanted to know as to how they could set up depots of useful Indian books, and what India could give them and how they could achieve 'cooperative industrialization' in order to be saved from the terrible exploitation under which they were suffering.

Gandhiji: India can give you good ideas. It can give you books of universal worth. The commerce between India and Africa will be of ideas and services, not of manufactured goods against raw materials after the fashion of Western exploiters. Then India can offer you the spinning wheel. If I had discovered it when I was in South Africa, I would have introduced it among the Africans who were my neighbours in Phoenix. You can grow cotton, you have ample leisure and plenty of manual skill. You should study and adopt the lesson of the village crafts we are trying to revive. Therein lies the key to your salvation.

Harijan, 24 February 1946

Gandhi on truth and nonviolence

Truth was God, Gandhi concluded, envisioning the creation of Truth through nonviolence. To stand disciplined for Truth, in the face of superior force, was at the core of nonviolent resistance for Gandhi. Only the pursuit of Truth gave one the courage and willingness to accept all of the consequences – and cheerfully. Equally, Gandhi declared, 'Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.'[18]

Non-violent resistance implies the very opposite of weakness. Defiance combined with non-retaliatory acceptance of repression from one's opponents is active, not passive. It requires strength, and there is nothing automatic or intuitive about the resoluteness required for using non-violent methods in political struggle and the quest for Truth.

I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do. In doing so, I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of Truth and Non-violence.

Harijan, 28 March 1936

There is no such thing as Gandhism. I have not put anything new before India; I have only presented an ancient thing in a new way. I have tried to utilize it in a new field. Hence my ideas cannot be appropriately called Gandhism. We shall adopt truth wherever we find it, praise it wherever we see it, and pursue it. . . . I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems.

21 July 1938, in *Harijan*, 28 March 1936

But I must warn you against carrying the impression with you that mine is the final word on non-violence. I know my own limitations. I am but a humble seeker after truth. And all I claim is that every experiment of mine has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. Its use is not restricted to individuals merely but it can be practised on a mass scale.

Interview with Benjamin E. Mays, *Harijan*, 20 March 1937;
Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 2: *Truth and Non-violence*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 399–400

18. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948).

Nonviolent action or 'ahimsa'

Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence. Violence does not mean emancipation from fear, but discovering the means of combating the cause of fear. Non-violence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear. The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He recks not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practise *ahimsa* to perfection. The votary of *ahimsa* has only one fear, that is of God.

Harijan, 1 September 1940

The *Rishis* [sages] who discovered the Law of Non-violence in the midst of violence were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Young India, 11 August 1920

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the *rishis* and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit.

'The Doctrine of the Sword',
Young India, 11 August 1920

Revolting crime is intended to exercise pressure. But it is the insane pressure of anger and ill-will. I contend that non-violent acts exert pressure far more effective than violent acts, for that pressure comes from goodwill and gentleness.

Young India, 26 December 1924

In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment.

Harijan, 22 February 1942

Courtesy towards opponents and eagerness to understand their view-point is the ABC of non-violence.

The Hindustan Standard, 20 July 1944

[In humans] reason quickens and guides the feeling; in brutes, the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason, and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil.

Harijan, 21 November 1936

Till my eyes of geometrical understanding had been opened, my brain was swimming, as I read and re-read the twelve axioms of Euclid. After the opening of my eyes geometry seemed to be the easiest science to learn. Much more so is the case with non-violence. It is a matter of faith and experience, not of argument beyond a point. So long as the world refuses to believe, she must await a miracle, that is, an ocular demonstration of non-violence on a mass scale. They say this is against human nature – non-violence is only for the individual. If so, where is the difference in kind between man and beast?

'The Greatest Force', *Harijan*, 12 October 1935

We dare not enter the Kingdom of Liberty with mere lip-homage to Truth and Non-violence.

Young India, 16 February 1922

Non-violence is like radium in its action. An infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society.

Harijan, 12 November 1938

Universality of nonviolence

Truth and non-violence are no cloistered virtues but applicable as much in the forum and the legislatures as in the market place.

Harijan, 8 May 1937

Segaon, Wardha, 26 September 1936

Remember one of the attributes of non-violence. It seldom speaks, it simply and silently acts. It appeals not to the intellect, it pierces the heart. The more it speaks and argues, the less effective it becomes.

Gandhi, *Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur by M. K. Gandhi*
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961)

Delhi, 14 November 1924
To the 'World Tomorrow'
396 Broadway
New York, USA

> My study and experience of non-violence have proved to me that it is the greatest force in the world. It is the surest method of discovering the truth and it is the quickest because there is no other. It works silently, almost imperceptibly, but none the less surely. It is the one constructive process of Nature in the midst of incessant destruction going on about us. I hold it to be a superstition to believe that it can work only in private life. There is no department of life public or private to which that force cannot be applied.
>
> *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 25, pp. 322–3

> Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along.
>
> *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 June 1944

Nonviolence does not work in the same way as violence

> The fact is that non-violence does not work in the same way as violence. It works in the opposite way. An armed man naturally relies upon his arms. A man who is intentionally unarmed relies upon the unseen force called God by poets, but called the unknown by scientists. But that which is unknown is not necessarily non-existent. God is the Force among all forces known and unknown. Non-violence without reliance upon that Force is poor stuff to be thrown in the dust.
>
> *Harijan*, 28 June 1942

The power of nonviolence

> Mere renunciation of the sword, if there is a sword in your heart, will not carry you far. Your renunciation of the sword cannot be said to be genuine unless it generates in your hearts a power, the opposite of that of the sword and superior to it.
>
> Pyarelal, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among North West Frontier Pathans* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950), p. 115

11 September 1932

> It is our actions which count. Thoughts, however good in themselves, are like false pearls unless they are translated into action.
>
> Mahadev Haribhai Desai, A Letter, *Diary of Mahadev Desai* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953–) Vol. 2, p. 15

Nonviolence is the mightiest force in the world

I have no disciples, being myself an aspirant after discipleship and in search of a guru. But that is irrelevant to the issue raised by my friend. To say or write a distasteful word is surely not violence, especially when the speaker or writer believes it to be true as I did when I spoke to Deenabandhu as reported in the quotation. But even if it were found that what I said was an exaggeration, or worse still, an untruth, it should not be violent in the sense used by my correspondent. The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word, or act, that is, an intention to do harm to the opponent so-called. Here there was and could be no such intention. I was engaged in a friendly conversation with two good Christians, both missionaries in their own way.

I have used much stronger language about *sanatanist* (Orthodox Hindu) behaviour towards *Harijans* (untouchables) and quite latterly about the acts of dear co-workers. But there has been no violent intention behind the use of my language. And generally I have been acquitted by my critics of any violent intention.

Indeed, the acid test of non-violence is that one thinks, speaks and acts non-violently, even when there is the gravest provocation to be violent. There is no merit being non-violent to the good and the gentle. Non-violence is the mightiest force in the world capable of resisting the greatest imaginable temptation. Jesus knew 'the generation of vipers', minced no words in describing them, but pleaded for mercy for them before the Judgment Throne, 'for they knew not what they were doing'.

I gave the company chapter and verse in support of the statements I made. I regard myself as a friend of the missionaries. I enjoy happy relations with many of them. But my friendships have never been blind to the limitations of my friends or the systems or methods they have supported.

False notions of propriety or fear of wounding susceptibilities often deter people from saying what they mean and ultimately land them on the shores of hypocrisy. But if non-violence of thought is to be evolved in individuals or societies or nations, truth has to be told, however harsh or unpopular it may appear to be for the moment. And mere non-violent action without the thought behind it is of little value. It can never be infectious. It is almost like a whited sepulchre. Thought is the power and the life behind it.

'What Is Non-Violence?' *Harijan*, 19 December 1936;
Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*,
op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 356–7

The trouble with our votaries of *ahimsa* is that they have made of *ahimsa* a blind fetish and put the greatest obstacle in the way of the spread of true *ahimsa* in our midst. The current – and, in my opinion, mistaken – view

of *ahimsa* has drugged our conscience and rendered us insensible to a host of other and more insidious forms of *himsa* like harsh words, harsh judgements, ill will, anger, spite and lust of cruelty; it has made us forget that there may be far more *himsa* in the slow torture of men and animals, the starvation and exploitation to which they are subjected out of selfish greed, the wanton humiliation and oppression of the weak and the killing of their self-respect that we witness all around us today than in mere benevolent taking of life.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*,
op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 421–3

The individual and nonviolence

The individual is the one supreme consideration.

Young India, 13 November 1924

2 September 1917

What is the good, they ask, of only one person opposing injustice; for he will be punished and destroyed, he will languish in prison or meet an untimely end through hanging. The objection is not valid. History shows that all reforms have begun with one person.

'Satyagraha – Not Passive Resistance'
(originally in Hindi, later translated into English),
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 13, pp. 523–4

A man without an ideal is like a ship without a rudder.

Bapu-ke-Ashirvad, 13 April 1945

My work will be finished, if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty. This defense avails, though the whole world may be against the individual resister.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*,
op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 336

The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall see Truth in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody's freedom of conscience.

Young India, 23 September 1926

I hold myself to be incapable of hating any being on earth. By a long course of prayerful discipline, I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody. I know that this is a big claim. Nevertheless, I make it in all humility. But I can and do hate evil wherever it exists.

Young India, 6 August 1925

Right judgement

No school of thought can claim a monopoly of right judgement. We are all liable to err and are often obliged to revise our judgements. . . . The least that we owe to ourselves as to others is to try to understand the opponent's view-point and, if we cannot accept it, respect it as fully as we would expect him to respect ours. It is one of the indispensable tests of a healthy public life.

Young India, 17 April 1924

There are times when you have to obey a call which is the highest of all, that is, the voice of conscience, even though such obedience may cost many a bitter tear; and even more, separation from friends, from family, from the State to which you may belong, from all that you have held as dear as life itself. For, this obedience is the Law of our being.

Young India, 18 March 1919

In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for everyone. Although essentially the principle is the same, yet everyone applies it in his or her own way. What is one man's food can be another's poison. Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet, for another person, who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply in order to copy me will be a sin.

If I wish to be an agriculturist and stay in the jungle, I will have to use the minimum unavoidable violence in order to protect my fields. I will have to kill monkeys, birds and insects which eat up my crops. If I do not wish to do so myself, I will have to engage someone to do it for me. There is not much difference between the two. To allow crops to be eaten up by animals in the name of *ahimsa* while there is a famine in the land is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or a sin under a different set of conditions.

Man is not to drown himself in the well of *shastras* but he is to dive into their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step he has to use his discrimination as to what is *ahimsa* and what is *himsa*. In this there is no room for shame or cowardice. The poet has said that the road leading up to God is for the brave, never for the cowardly.

Mussoorie, 29 May 1946; *Harijan*, 9 June 1946

True knowledge

The etymological meaning of conscience is 'true knowledge'. The dictionary meaning is 'faculty distinguishing between right and wrong and influencing conduct accordingly'. Possession of such a faculty is possible only for a trained person, that is, one who has undergone discipline and learnt to listen to the inner voice.

Young India, 23 September 1926

Truth

Sunday, July 3, 1932

What I said about *ahimsa* also applies to truth. If we split hairs about issues such as whether one may or may not tell a lie to save a cow and ignore what is daily happening before us, we cannot follow truth. By raising such complicated issues we make truth difficult to discover. If we follow truth today in solving the problems which confront us in our daily life, we shall know instinctively how to act in difficult situations when they arise.

Each of us should examine only himself or herself from this point of view. Do I deceive anybody knowingly? If I believe that B is a bad person but show him that I believe him to be good, I deceive him. Do I try to show, in order to win people's respect or esteem, that I possess certain virtues which in fact I do not possess? Do I exaggerate in my speech? Do I hide my misdeeds from persons to whom I should confess them? If a superior or co-worker puts me any question, do I evade him? Do I keep back what I ought to declare? If I do any of these things I am guilty of untruth. Everybody should examine his conduct daily in this manner and try to overcome his shortcomings. One to whom truth has become second nature and who has risen to a state so that he can never speak untruth may not do this. But everyone who has the least trace of untruth in him or who can follow truth only with effort should examine himself daily as explained above and put to himself those or any other similar questions which may occur to him and reply to them. Anybody who follows this practice even for a month will clearly observe a change having taken place in himself.

'How to Observe Truth' (originally in Gujarati, later translated into English), *CWMG*, op. cit., Vol. 50

The very insistence on Truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise. It has often meant endangering my life and incurring the displeasure of friends. But Truth is hard as adamant and tender as a blossom.

Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, translated from Gujarati by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1940; repr., 1948), p. 184

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.

Young India, 26 February 1925

The Ashram, Sabarmati, 9 July 1926
Mrs Robt. Armstrong
Mrs Paul R. Howard
2293 E Prospect 5
Kewanee, Illinois USA

Dear Friends,

I have your letter. Truth is not so simple as it appears to you. You know the story of the elephant and seven blind men who actually touched him. They all touched him at different parts. Their descriptions therefore differed from one another. They were all true from their own points of view and yet each appeared to be untrue from the points of view of the rest. The truth was beyond all the seven. We are all, you will perhaps agree, in the position of these seven sincere observers and we are blind as they are blind. We must therefore be content with believing the truth as it appears to us. The authenticity and the interpretation of the Biblical record is a thing you will not want me to discuss.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 31, p. 111

Confession of error

Confession of error is like a broom that sweeps always and leaves the surface cleaner than before. It is [a] million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves.

Young India, 13 February 1922

Hate suppression but not the suppressor

Man and his deed are two distinct things. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.

Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 337

It is manly enough to defend one's property, honour or religion at the point of [a] sword. It is . . . nobler to defend them without seeking to injure the wrong-doer. But it is . . . un-natural and dishonourable to forsake the post of duty, and, in order to save one's skin, to leave property, honour or religion to the mercy of the wrong-doer.

Young India, 15 October 1925

On anger

August 14, 1932

Instead of asking what you should do when you get angry, you should ask what you should do in order that you may not get angry. For that, we should cultivate a broad-minded attitude towards all and the feeling that we are in all people and they are in us. Just as the drops of water in [the] sea are different and yet the same, so are we in this sea of life. That being so, who should get angry with whom?

Letter to a Girl,
Diary of Mahadev Desai, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 361

It is the best thing to blame ourselves when people cannot get on well with us. Boundless charity necessarily includes all or it ceases to be boundless. We must be strict with ourselves and lenient with our neighbours. For we know not their difficulties and what they overcome.

With love,

Yours,
Bapu [the intimate nickname for father]

Letter to Satis Chandra Das Gupta, 18 September 1927,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 35, pp. 4, 5

Gandhi and the British

What is your own real attitude towards the English and your hope about England?

My attitude towards the English is one of utter friendliness and respect. I claim to be their friend, because it is contrary to my nature to distrust a single human being or to believe that any nation on earth is incapable of redemption. I have respect for Englishmen, because I recognize their bravery, their spirit of sacrifice for what they believe to be good for themselves, their cohesion and their powers of vast organization. My hope about them is that they will at no distant date retrace their steps, revise their policy of exploitation of undisciplined and ill-organized races and give tangible proof that India is an equal friend and partner in the British Commonwealth to come. Whether such an event will ever come to pass will largely depend upon our own conduct. That is to say I have hope of England because I have hope of India. We will not for ever remain disorganized and imitative. Beneath the present disorganization, demoralization and lack of initiative I can discover organization, moral strength and initiative forming themselves. A time is coming when England will be glad of India's friendship and India will disdain to reject the proffered hand because it has once despoiled her. I know that I have nothing to offer in proof of my hope. It is based on an immutable faith. And it is a poor faith that is based on proof commonly so-called.

Young India, 29 January 1925

Nonviolence made possible a change of heart toward the British

I do not consider Englishmen, in general, to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends.

Young India, 12 March 1930

My enmity is not against them, it is against their rule. I seem to be born to be an instrument to compass the end of that rule. But if a hair of an English head was touched, I should feel the same grief as I should over such a mishap to my brother.

Young India, 3 April 1930

Inasmuch as I know only of the poetry of love, you should not be surprised that I trust the English people. I have often been bitter. And I have often said to myself: 'When will this camouflage end? When will these people cease to exploit these poor people?' But instinctively I get the reply: 'That is the heritage that they have had from Rome.' I must conduct myself in accordance with the dictates of the Law of Love, hoping and expecting in the long run to affect the English nature.

Young India, 12 November 1931

I have no hate in me for a single Englishman. I am not interested in driving him out of India. I am interested in converting him into a servant of India, instead of his being and believing himself to be a ruler or a member of the ruling race.

Harijan, 13 January 1940

Transformation regarding war

I felt that Indians residing in England ought to do their bit in the war. English students had volunteered to serve in the army, and Indians might do no less. A number of objections were taken to this line of argument. There was, it was contended, a world of difference between the Indians and the English. We were slaves and they were masters. How could a slave co-operate with the master in the hour of the latter's need? Was it not the duty of the slave, seeking to be free, to make the master's need his opportunity? This argument failed to appeal to me then. I knew the difference of status between an Indian and an Englishman, but I did not believe that we had been quite reduced to slavery. I felt then that it was more the fault of individual British officials than of the British system, and that we could convert them by love. If we could improve our status through the help and co-operation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need. Though the system was faulty, it did not seem to me to be intolerable, as it does today. But if, having lost my faith

in the system, I refuse to co-operate with the British Government today, how could those friends then do so, having lost their faith not only in the system but in the officials as well?

I thought that England's need should not be turned into our opportunity, and that it was more becoming and farsighted not to press our demands while the war lasted. I therefore adhered to my advice and invited those who would enlist as volunteers.

By enlisting men for ambulance work in South Africa and in England, and recruits for field service in India, I helped not the cause of war, but I helped the institution called the British Empire in whose ultimate beneficial character I then believed. My repugnance to war was as strong then as it is today; and I could not then have and would not have shouldered a rifle. But one's life is not a single straight line, it is a bundle of duties very often conflicting. And one is called upon continually to make one's choice between one duty and another. As a citizen not then, and not even now, a reformer leading an agitation against the institution of war, I had to advise and lead men who believed in war but who from cowardice or from base motives, or from anger against the British Government, refrained from enlisting. I did not hesitate to advise them that so long as they believed in war and professed loyalty to the British constitution they were in duty bound to support it by enlistment.

Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 424–5

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. *Kshama virasya bhushanam* [Sanskrit]: 'Forgiveness adorns a soldier.' But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her.

Young India, 11 August 1920

King on truth and nonviolence

King saw nonviolent struggle comprehensively. It was philosophically and theologically grounded. It was a means of power. The dignity and courage that it inspired also meant an end to demoralization.

We believe in law and order. Don't get panicky. Don't do anything panicky at all. Don't get your weapons. He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. . . . We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies. . . . Be good to them. Love them and let them know you love them. I did not start this boycott. I was asked by you to serve as your spokesman. I want it to be known the length and breadth of this land that if I am stopped this movement will not stop. If I am stopped our work

will not stop. For what we are doing is right. What we are doing is just. And God is with us.[19]

Quoted in *Montgomery Advertiser*, 31 January 1956

Excerpt from 'Turning Point in Civil Rights'[20]

2 March 1962

The young people, who first participated in the sit-ins demonstrations, were still another instance of the Negro's initiative imagination in nonviolently challenging structures which could not be breached by routine court cases.

No honest historian of the future can possibly continue the history of those who made America great and ignore the names of those young people.

The freedom rides which were also begun by the young, grew to such proportion that they eventually encompassed people of all ages, and the halt, lame and blind.

Not even the mad dogs of the southern sheriffs were able to deter these brave peoples from their chosen destinations, and the bombs of the would-be murderers stopped not one Freedom Rider until it was completed, or its participants were in jail.

The excerpt that follows is from the first article of political journalism to be published under King's authorship. Originally drafted by Bayard Rustin, and edited and revised by King, it was the featured article in the second issue of *Liberation* magazine, then a new publication of the War Resisters League, edited by Rustin and involving A. J. Muste, Charles Walker and others. The issue was devoted to the Montgomery bus boycott. Aimed at raising support in the North, King argues that the movement is finding its strength in the economic muscle of the black community, the militant leadership of the church and a 'new and powerful weapon – nonviolent resistance.'

We Southern Negroes believe that it is essential to defend the right of equality now. From this position we will not and cannot retreat. Fortunately, we are increasingly aware that we must not try to defend our position by

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19. King made these remarks to a large crowd that gathered outside his parsonage at 309 South Jackson Street after a bomb had exploded on the porch, causing damage but no injuries. The angry group refused to obey police orders to disperse. When King stepped onto the porch 'the people let out with cheers that could be heard blocks away. With the raising of his hand they became quiet'. King persuaded them to go home peacefully. Notes taken by Willie Mae Lee at a mass meeting in Montgomery on 30 January 1956, in the Preston Valien Collection, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana.

20. Excerpted from King's first column to be featured in the *Amsterdam News*, New York.

methods that contradict the aim of brotherhood. We in Montgomery believe that the only way to press on is by adopting the philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance.

This method permits a struggle to go on with dignity and without the need to retreat. It is a method that can absorb the violence that is inevitable in social change whenever deep-seated prejudices are challenged.

If, in pressing for justice and equality in Montgomery, we discover that those who reject equality are prepared to use violence, we must not despair, retreat, or fear. Before they make this crucial decision, they must remember: whatever they do, we will not use violence in return. We hope we can act in the struggle in such a way that they will see the error of their approach and will come to respect us. Then we can all live together in peace and equality.[21]

King, 'Our Struggle',
Liberation, April 1956

There is another method which can serve as an alternative to the method of violence, and it is a method of nonviolent resistance. This is an important method, a significant method, and it is a method that I would like to recommend. A method that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. There are several basic things that we can say about this method of nonviolent resistance, this technique of nonviolence. And these things are basic, these things are important, and understanding this method and this technique in confronting the problems of discrimination and of segregation and standing out against the forces of injustice. The first thing that can be said about this method is that it is not a method of submission or surrender. And there are those who would argue that this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity, and so it is not a proper method to use. But that is not true of the nonviolent method. The nonviolent resister is just as opposed to the evil that he is protesting against as a violent resister. Now it is true that this method is nonaggressive and passive in the sense that the nonviolent resister does not use physical aggression against his opponent. But at the same time the mind and the emotions are active, actively trying to persuade the opponent to change his ways and to convince him that he is mistaken and to lift him to a higher level of existence. This method is nonaggressive physically, but it is aggressive spiritually. It is passive physically, but it is active mentally and spiritually. So that the first thing about the method of passive resistance, or the method of nonviolent resistance, is that it is not

21. In Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell and Peter Holloran (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

a method of surrender, or a weapon, or a method of submission, but it is a method that is *very* active in seeking to change conditions, and even though it is passive it is still resisting.

King, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony', address delivered to executives of the Home Mission Societies of Christian Friends, Green Lake, Wisconsin, 23 July 1956, in Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell and Peter Holloran (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* Vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 321–8 [hereinafter cited as *Papers 3*]

In this report on the final stage of the Montgomery bus boycott, King contends that the movement has entered its 'most difficult' period despite its legal and moral victory.

Everyone must realize that in the early days of the protest there were many who questioned the effectiveness, and even the manliness, of non-violence. But as the protest has continued there has been a growing commitment on the part of the entire Negro population. Those who were willing to get their guns in the beginning are coming to see the futility of such an approach.

The struggle has produced a definite character development among Negroes. The Negro is more willing now to tell the truth about his attitude to segregation. In the past, he often used deception as a technique for appeasing and soothing the white man. Now he is willing to stand up and speak more honestly.

Crime has noticeably diminished. One nurse, who owns a Negro hospital in Montgomery, said to me recently that since the protest started she has been able to go to church Sunday mornings, something she had not been able to do for years. This means that Saturday nights are not so vicious as they used to be.

There is an amazing lack of bitterness, a contagious spirit of warmth and friendliness. The children seem to display a new sense of belonging. The older children are aware of the conflict and the resulting tension, but they act as if they expect the future to include a better world to live in.

We did not anticipate these developments. But they have strengthened our faith in nonviolence. Believing that a movement is finally judged by its effect on the human beings associated with it, we are not discouraged by the problems that lie ahead.

King, 'We Are Still Walking', *Liberation*, December 1956

King outlined the following talk about the basic precepts of nonviolence on seven note cards. No specific date or audience is given. King's 1957 notes are shown exactly as he wrote them; they include his own changes as well as spelling and grammatical errors due to haste or oversight.

Nonviolence as we think of it today is a technique of action. It seeks to effect change and it operates in a conflict situation. But before acting on this method, we need to understand the undergirding philosophy, its theoretical basis. There is no ultimate dichotomy between theory and action. They are two sides of the same coin. Action without theory is aimless and misguided. Theory without action [is] empty and meaningless abstraction; [before action] one should dwell in the quiet sanctuary of theory.

The other reason that theory is necessary is because if we simply act [*with?*] nonviolence [*will it?*] be relegated to a mere useful technique, a pragmatic tool, a tentative strategy. Nonviolence at its best is a philosophy of life.

So we begin with the basic precepts:

I Nonviolence means first and foremost a strict adherence to truth. (It is literally 'truth force') This carries with it honesty and integrity. But the minute we talk of truth some difficult questions arise:
(1) What is truth?
(2) Man in his finiteness cannot know absolute truth.
Truth is the whole therefore we must find some absolute guide that can lead us up the road of truth. This leads to the second precept of nonviolence.

II This principle is <u>noninjury</u>. It is action based on the refusal to do harm. It is renunciation of the will to kill or to damage So that the only test of truth is action based on the refusal to do harm. But noninjury may simply be a refusal to inflict external violence. There needs to be something to prevent internal violence.

III Nonviolence is absolute commitment to the way of love. Love is not emotional bash; it is not empty sentimentalism. It is the active outpouring of one's whole being into the being of another.

IV The highest expression of love is self-suffering. Nonviolence recognizes the creative value of suffering. It is the true means of the <u>cross</u>. Self suffering is not something substituted for the inability to use violence. It is not cowardice. Nonviolence does resist. It resists not by inflicting suffering, but by taking suffering on onself. It is active resistance from a higher level. The nonviolent [*two words illegible*] the quiet courage of dying if necessary without killing. The opponent strikes you on the cheek, and you strike him on the heart by your amazing spiritual audacity in turning the other cheek. He hits you physically and you hit him spiritually. (His creed is this: We will match.)

There are certain persuppositions to all of these basic precepts.

(a) the moral universe is one and the morals of individuals, groups and nations must be the same.

(b) Means and ends must be consistent (the weakness of communism). Our movement is not communistic.

(c) An individual has a moral obligation to resist evil. Boycotting is noncooperation with evil.

(d) Persuasion is ultimately more effective than coercion. The objective of nonviolence is to win the victory over the conflict situation, to persuade the opponent, not to triumph over him.

(e) All men have potentiality for goodness. Men allow their consciences to doze. The nonviolent resister is the constructive tension creator.

(f) All reality hinges on moral foundation, and therefore justice will ultimately triumph. (Resurrection)

Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University, Boston

Nonviolence and racial justice

King drew together elements from major speeches he had given during the Montgomery bus boycott for an article written in the scholarly journal *The Christian Century*. In it, he justified the use of nonviolent resistance, based on *agape* Love, to achieve racial justice.

Five points can be made concerning nonviolence as a method in bringing about better racial conditions.

First, this is not a method for cowards; it *does* resist. The nonviolent resister is just as strongly opposed to the evil against which he protests as is the person who uses violence. His method is passive or nonaggressive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent. But his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade the opponent that he is mistaken. This method is passive physically but strongly active spiritually; it is nonaggressive physically but dynamically aggressive spiritually.

A second point is that nonviolent resistance does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that noncooperation and boycotts are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

A third characteristic of this method is that the attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who are caught in those forces. It is evil we are seeking to defeat, not the persons victimized by evil. Those of us who struggle against racial injustice must come to see that the

basic tension is not between races. As I like to say to the people in Montgomery, Alabama: 'The tension in this city is not between white people and Negro people. The tension is at bottom between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. And if there is a victory it will be a victory not merely for 50,000 Negroes, but a victory for justice and the forces of light. We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may happen to be unjust.'

A fourth point that must be brought out concerning nonviolent resistance is that it avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love. In struggling for human dignity the oppressed people of the world must not allow themselves to become bitter or indulge in hate campaigns. To retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the hate in the world. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can be done only by projecting the ethics of love to the center of our lives. . . .

Finally, the method of nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. It is this deep faith in the future that causes the nonviolent resister to accept suffering without retaliation. He knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. This belief that God is on the side of truth and justice comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something at the very center of our faith which reminds us that Good Friday may reign for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the Easter drums. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A.D. and B.C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. So in Montgomery we can walk and never get weary, because we know that there will be a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice.

King, 'Non-violence and Racial Justice',
Christian Century, 6 February 1957

Even nonviolence as a technique is a step forward

Admittedly, nonviolence in the truest sense is not a strategy that one uses simply because it is expedient at the moment; nonviolence is ultimately a way of life that men live by because of the sheer morality of its claim. But even granting this, the willingness to use nonviolence as a technique is a step forward. For he who goes this far is more likely to adopt nonviolence later as a way of life.

King, *Stride toward Freedom,* op. cit., pp. 87–9

I don't think any leader of the South has ever suggested singing and praying as a substitute for positive action, and certainly this is why we are suffering and being brutalized as leaders. If we were passively and silently accepting

evil, we would not be facing the condemnation that we are facing today in the white community.

As you probably know, I believe firmly in nonviolence as a way to solve our problem. And I further believe that love must be our guiding ideal. But this does not imply that we are to do nothing. It simply means that we must stand up and resist the system of segregation and all of the injustices which come our way and at the same time refuse to hate our opponents and use violence against them. For I still believe with Jesus that 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.' And he who hates does as much harm to himself as to the person that he hates.

King to Lewis Happ, 25 May 1959,
letter in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University, Boston

Nonviolence answers the crucial political and moral question of our time

After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of [the African-American] movement is profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time – the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. . . . I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

King, Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Oslo, Norway,
11 December 1964, in James Melvin Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1986), pp. 224, 225, 226

The sword of nonviolence

Nonviolence is like a sword in that it strikes with power at hatred and evil, both inside a person and society. It heals not by deliberately injurying another, but by stimulating and challenging conscience and morality. It thus heals in two ways.

In the first place, it heals personally. That is: like a sword, nonviolence confronts a man with the decision to face himself honestly. Many of my friends today have discovered that being nonviolent has dried up their internal anxieties; renewed them in their sense of life and purpose; changed their bitterness into forgiveness towards others and replaced their

vindictiveness with active good will. There is a redemptive power in nonviolence which blesses the devotee with a new sense of freedom and love.

In the second place, nonviolence acts as a sword that HEALS in our society. Today many achievements for the betterment of our nation have come because our society saw nonviolent resistance stand with dignity against racial hatred in Mississippi, Birmingham and Selma. In 1960 only a few Americans considered the plight of the average Negro caught in prejudice and segregation. In 1965 justice and opportunity for all Americans, including the Negro, have become the primary domestic matter. And most Americans now feel that minority groups, including the poor, must be given a better chance. The nonviolent movement struck with the cutting edge of a sword, and caused the emergence of a new more sensitive dimension of social conscience.

There is today a great need for many people to examine carefully the history, development and strategy of nonviolence. . . . You know unless we human beings can find a creative alternative to hatred and war, we might well destroy ourselves.

King, manuscript in Martin Luther King Jr,
Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

Resounding need for nonviolence for practical and moral reasons

The year 1966 brought with it the first public challenge to the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence from within the ranks of the civil rights movement. Resolutions of self-defense and Black Power sounded forth from our friends and neighbors. At the same time riots erupted in several major cities. Inevitably a link was made between the two phenomena though movement leadership continued to deny any implications of violence in the concept of Black Power.

The nation's press heralded these incidents as an end of the Negro's reliance on nonviolence as a means of achieving freedom. Articles appeared on 'The Plot to get Whitey', and 'Must Negroes fight back?' and one had the impression that a serious movement was underway to lead the Negro to freedom through the use of violence.

Indeed, there was much talk of violence. It was the same talk we have heard on the fringes of the nonviolence movement for the past ten years. It was the talk of fearful men, saying that they would not join the nonviolent movement because they would not remain nonviolent if attacked. Now the climate had shifted so that it was even more popular to talk of violence, but in spite of the talk of violence there emerged no action in this direction.

One reporter pointed out, in a recent *New Yorker* article, that the fact that Beckwith, Price, Rainey and Collie Leroy Wilkins [alleged killers of blacks] remain alive is living testimony to the fact that the Negro remains nonviolent. And if this is not enough, a mere check of the statistics of

casualties in the recent riots shows that the vast majority of persons killed in riots are Negroes. All the reports of sniping in Los Angeles's expressways did not produce a single casualty. The young demented white student at the University of Texas has shown what damage a sniper can do when he is serious. In fact, this one young man killed more people in one day than all the Negroes have killed in all the riots in all the cities since the Harlem riots of 1964. This must raise a serious question about the violent intent of the Negro, for certainly there are many ex-GIs within our ghettos, and no small percentage of those recent migrants from the South have demonstrated some proficiency hunting squirrels and rabbits.

I can only conclude that the Negro, even in his bitterest moments, is not intent on killing white men to be free. This does not mean that the Negro is a saint who abhors violence. Unfortunately, a check of the hospitals in any Negro community on any Saturday night will make you painfully aware of the violence within the Negro community. Hundreds of victims of shooting and cutting lie bleeding in the emergency rooms, but there is seldom if ever a white person who is the victim of Negro hostility. . . . Arguments that the American Negro is a part of a world which is two-thirds colored and that there will come a day when the oppressed people of color will rise together to throw off the yoke of white oppression are at least fifty years away from being relevant. There is no colored nation, including China, which now shows even the potential of leading a revolution of color in any international proportion. Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, and Nigeria are fighting their own battles for survival against poverty, illiteracy and the subversive influence of neocolonialism, so that they offer no hope to Angola, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, and much less to the American Negro.

The hard cold facts of racial life in the world today indicate that the hope of the people of color in the world may well rest on the American Negro and his ability to reform the structures of racist imperialism from within and thereby turn the technology and wealth of the West to the task of liberating the world from want.

This is no time for romantic illusions about freedom and empty philosophical debate. This is a time for action. What is needed is a strategy for change, a tactical program which will bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible. So far this has only been offered by the nonviolent movement.

Our record of achievement through nonviolent action is already remarkable. The dramatic social changes which have been made across the South are unmatched by the annals of history. Montgomery, Albany, Birmingham and Selma have paved the way for untold progress. Even more remarkable is the fact that this progress occurred with a minimum of human sacrifice and loss of life.

Not a single person has been killed in a nonviolent demonstration. The bombings of the 16th Street Baptist Church occurred several months

after demonstrations stopped. Rev. James Reeb, Ms Viola Liuzzo and Jimmie Lee Jackson were all murdered at night following demonstrations. And fewer people have been killed in the ten years of action across the South than were killed in three nights of rioting in Watts. No similar changes have occurred without infinitely more sufferings, whether it be Gandhi's drive for independence in India or any African nation's struggle for independence.

King, 'Non-violence: The Only Road to Freedom',
Ebony, October 1966, as reprinted in Washington (ed.),
A Testament of Hope, op. cit., pp. 54–6

Dangerous to organize a movement around self-defense

There are many people who very honestly raise the question of self-defense. This must be placed in perspective. It goes without saying that people will protect their homes. This is a right guaranteed by the Constitution and respected even in the worst areas of the South. But the mere protection of one's home and person against assault by lawless night riders does not provide any positive approach to the fears and conditions which produce violence. There must be some program for establishing law. Our experience in places like Savannah and Macon, Georgia, has been that a drive which registers Negroes to vote can do more to provide protection of the law and respect for Negroes by even racist sheriffs than anything we have seen.

In a nonviolent demonstration, self-defense must be approached from quite another perspective. One must remember that the cause of the demonstration is some exploitation or form of oppression that has made it necessary for men of courage and good will to demonstrate against the evil. For example, a demonstration against the evil of *de facto* school segregation than to have generation after generation of children suffer in ignorance.

In such a demonstration, the point is made that schools are inadequate. This is the evil to which one seeks to point; anything else detracts from that point and interferes with confrontation of the primary evil against which one demonstrates. Of course, no one wants to suffer and be hurt. But it is more important to get at the cause than be safe. It is better to shed a little blood from a blow on the head or a rock thrown by an angry mob than to have children by the thousands grow up reading at a fifth- or sixth-grade level. It is always amusing to me when a Negro man says he can't demonstrate with us because if someone hit him he would fight back. Here is a man whose children are being plagued by rats and roaches, whose wife is robbed daily at overpriced ghetto food stores, who himself is working for about two-thirds the pay of a white person doing a similar job and with similar skills, and in spite of all this daily suffering it takes someone spitting on him or calling him a nigger to make him want to fight.

Conditions are such for Negroes in America that all Negroes ought to be fighting aggressively. It is as ridiculous for a Negro to raise the question of self-defense in relation to nonviolence as it is for a soldier on the battlefield to say he is not going to take any risks. He is there because he believes that the freedom of his country is worth the risk of his life. The same is true of the nonviolent demonstrator. He sees the misery of his people so clearly that he volunteers to suffer in their behalf and put an end to their plight.

Furthermore, it is extremely dangerous to organize a movement around self-defense. The line between defensive violence and aggressive or retaliatory violence is a fine line indeed. When violence is tolerated even as a means of self-defense there is grave danger that in the fervor of emotion the main fight will be lost over the question of self-defense.

When my home was bombed in 1955 in Montgomery, many men wanted to retaliate, to place an armed guard on my home. But the issue there was not my life, but whether Negroes would achieve first-class treatment on the city's buses. Had we become distracted by the question of my safety we would have lost the moral offensive and sunk to the level of our oppressors.

I must continue by faith or it is too great a burden to bear and violence, even in self-defense, creates more problems than it solves. Only a refusal to hate or kill can put an end to the chain of violence in the world and lead us toward a community where men can live together without fear. Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

King, 'Non-violence: The Only Road to Freedom',
Ebony, October 1966, as reprinted in Washington (ed.),
A Testament of Hope, op. cit., pp. 56–8

Nonviolence: work as if social change could come the next morning

The nonviolent approach provides an answer to the long debated question of gradualism *versus* immediacy. On the one hand it prevents one from falling into the sort of patience which is an excuse for do-nothingism and escapism, ending up in standstillism. On the other hand it saves one from the irresponsible words which estrange without reconciling and the hasty judgement which is blind to the necessities of the social process. It recognizes the need for moving toward the goal of justice with wise restraint and calm reasonableness. But it also recognizes the immorality of slowing up in the move toward justice and capitulating to the guardians of an unjust status quo. It recognizes that social change cannot come overnight. But it causes one to work as if it were a possibility the next morning.

King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., p. 221

Gandhi on love and reconciliation

Just as Love was central for King, Truth was cardinal for Gandhi. Yet they each frequently spoke of both Truth and Love. What did Gandhi mean when he spoke of love? 'If the name "love". . . seems to you as too impossible or repulsively sentimental', Richard Gregg wrote, 'call it a sort of intelligence or knowledge. It must not, however, be mawkish or silly-sentimental.'[22] Gandhi thought that Love contains more energy than anger. It was the mobilization of such energy on a massive scale that Gandhi sought in order to replace violence.

Ultimately, one is guided not by the intellect but by the heart. The heart accepts the conclusions for which the intellect subsequently finds the reasoning. Argument follows conviction. Man finds reason in support of whatever he does or wants to do.

Young India, 12 November 1945

Mutual trust and mutual love are not trust and no love. The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbour even though you distrust him. Of what avail is my love, if it be only so long as I trust my friend? Even thieves do that. They become enemies immediately the trust is gone.

Harijan, 3 March 1946

Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself.

Young India, 9 July 1925

What was the 'larger symbiosis' that Buddha and Christ preached? Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from Heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastised, they showed unmistakable gentleness and love behind every act of theirs. They would not raise a finger against their enemies, but would gladly surrender themselves rather than the truth for which they lived. Buddha would have died resisting the priesthood, if the majesty of his love had not proved to be equal to the task of bending the priesthood. Christ died on the Cross with a crown of thorns on his head

22. Richard B. Gregg, *The Psychology and Strategy of Gandhi's Nonviolent Resistance*, edited by Charles A. Baker (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1929; repr. New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), p. 63.

defying the might of a whole Empire. And if I raise resistances of a nonviolent character I simply and humbly follow in the footsteps of the great teachers named by my critic.

'Neither a Saint nor a Politician', *Young India*, 12 May 1920

Scientists tell us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms that comprise this globe of ours, it would crumble to pieces and we would cease to exist; and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, so must there be in all things animate and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love.

Young India, 5 May 1920

Law of love

Modern science is replete with illustrations of the seemingly impossible having become possible within living memory. But the victories of physical science would be nothing against the victory of the Science of Life, which is summed up in Love which is the Law of our being.

Harijan, 26 September 1936

Whether mankind will consciously follow the Law of Love, I do not know. But that need not perturb us. The Law will work, just as the Law of Gravitation will work, whether we accept it or not. And just as a scientist will work wonders out of various applications of the laws of Nature, even so a man, who applies the Law of Love with scientific precision, can work greater wonders.

Young India, 1 October 1931

I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and therefore there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living. And if that is the law of life, we have to work it out in daily life. Wherever there are jars, wherever you are confronted with an opponent conquer him with love. In this crude manner I have worked it out in my life. That does not mean that all my difficulties are solved. Only I have found that this law of love has answered as the law of destruction has never done.

It is not that I am incapable of anger, for instance, but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control. Whatever may be the result, there is always in me conscious struggle for following the law of nonviolence deliberately and ceaselessly. Such a struggle leaves one stronger for it. The more I work at this law, the more I feel the delight in life, the delight in the scheme of the universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of nature that I have no power to describe.

Young India, 1 October 1931

I observe in the limited field in which I find myself, that unless I can reach the hearts of men and women, I am able to do nothing. I observe further that so long as the spirit of hate persists in some shape or other, it is impossible to establish peace or to gain our freedom by peaceful effort. We cannot love one another, if we hate Englishmen. We cannot love the Japanese and hate Englishmen. We must either let the Law of Love rule us through and through or not at all. Love among ourselves based on hatred of others breaks down under the slightest pressure. The fact is such love is never real love. It is an armed peace. And so it will be in this great movement in the west against war. War will only be stopped when the conscience of mankind has become sufficiently elevated to recognize the undisputed supremacy of the Law of Love in all the walks of life. Some say this will never come to pass. I shall retain the faith till the end of my earthly existence that it shall come to pass.

'Non-Violence – The Greatest Force',
The Hindu, 8 November 1926

Harshness is conquered by gentleness, hatred by love, lethargy by zeal and darkness by light. Your love flows in driblets; but, as a mere drizzle of rain goes to waste, so, I see, does love oftentimes. It is a heavy downpour of rain which drenches the soil to fullness; likewise, only a profuse shower of love overcomes hatred. Where you go wrong is in expecting justice. Go on doing justice yourself. Love is not love which asks for a return.
Blessings from
Bapu [father]

Letter to Maganlal Gandhi, dated 18 May 1918
(originally written in Gujarati, later translated into English),
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 14, p. 402

I receive compliments every so often. They pass through my mind like water poured on to a duck's back. But you, Sir, have paid a compliment to me this evening which I feel inclined to accept. You think that if there is any person who has right to speak on [the] Brotherhood of Man, at least I should have that right, and I think so too. I have tried myself on many an occasion to find out whether it is possible for me to hate – I don't say love – my persecutor, and I must honestly but in all humility confess to you that I have not succeeded. I cannot recall a single occasion when I have felt constrained to hate a single human being. How I came to it I do not know. But I am simply giving to you a life-long practice and, therefore, it is really literally true that, if there is any person who has the right to speak on [the] Brotherhood of Man, I at least have that right.

Brotherhood does not mean loving or sympathizing with those, extending the hand of fellowship to those who will in return love you. That

is a bargain. Brotherhood is not a mercantile affair. And my philosophy, my religion teaches me that brotherhood is not confined merely to the human species; that is, if we really have imbibed the spirit of brotherhood, it extends to the lower animals.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 15 August 1925

This talk of passive non-resistance has been the bane of our national life. Forgiveness is a quality. . . . 'Conquer anger', says Lord Buddha, 'by non-anger.' But what is that 'non-anger'? It is a positive quality and means the supreme virtue of charity or love. You must be roused to this supreme virtue which must express itself in your going to the angry man, ascertaining from him the cause of his anger, making amends if you have given any cause for offence and then bringing home to him the error of his ways and convincing him that it is wrong to be provoked. This consciousness of the quality of the soul, and deliberate exercise of it, elevate not only the man but the surrounding atmosphere.

Speech on forgiveness, *Young India*, 12 January 1928

Satyagraha proceeds on the active principle of Love which says, 'Love those that despitefully use you.' It is easy for you to love your friends. But I say unto you, 'love your enemies.'

Harijan, 14 May 1938

When I was a little child, there used to be two blind performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician. When he played on his instrument, his fingers swept the strings with an unerring instinct and everybody listened spell-bound to his playing. Similarly there are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music.

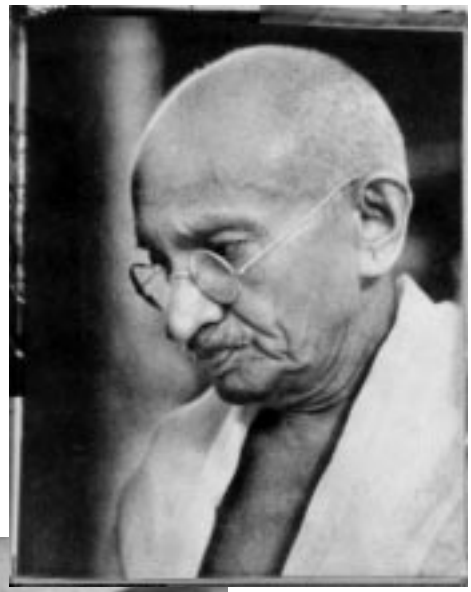
Harijan, 27 May 1939

We should try to understand the psychology of the evil-doer. He is very often victim of his circumstances. By patience and sympathy, we shall be able to win over at least some of them to the side of justice. Morehow, we should not forget that even evil is sustained through the co-operation, either willing or forced, of good. Truth alone is self-sustained. In the last resort we can curb power of the evil-doers to do mischief by withdrawing all co-operation from them and completely isolating them.

This in essence is the principle of non-violent non-co-operation. It follows, therefore, that it must have its roots in love. Its object should not be to punish the opponent or to inflict injury upon him. Even while non-co-operating with him, we must make him feel that in us he has a friend and we should try to reach his heart by rendering him humanitarian service whenever possible. In fact it is the acid test of non-violence that in a non-

Whether through his prolific writings or by telephone, Gandhi viewed communications as integral to his campaigns because persuasion was at the heart of his approach.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

Gandhi with women of the Indian National Congress.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)



Gandhi in his later years. He continued to work on improving his grasp of the power of nonviolent resistance, a sophisticated concept that understands conflict to be a chance for rearranging the sources of a dispute.
(Photo: Courtesy of the Government of India)

violent conflict there is no rancour left behind, and in the end the enemies are converted into friends.

Discussion with Abdul Ghaffar Khan,[23]
Harijan, 12 November 1938

King on love and reconciliation

King's thinking revolved around Love – a central conviction of Christianity and its pivotal contribution to world thought. Of the three great monotheistic revealed faiths, Judaism is the religion of the will of God and obedience, Islam the religion of the majesty of God and humility, and Christianity the religion of the love of God and reciprocal love. In a sense, Christianity needs only one word: Love. In King's perspective, Love was inseparable from justice, and in favoring the Greek word *agape* he meant to emphasize Love in its sense of goodwill toward humanity. Such love asks nothing in return. To him, Love was also redemptive – it could liberate (or ransom) one from sin. Redemption also signified to recover or bring someone back. King meant to maximize the possibility of bringing back someone temporarily lost or alienated by the disruption necessary to confront evil.

As with Gandhi, Love was not a weak and insipid sentimentality, but a source of power and energy – the movement of power toward the world.[24] King's 'beloved community', conveying *agape*, was the counterpart to Gandhi's vision of *sarvodaya*, the good society. For neither Gandhi nor King was this utopian. It was realism: the recognition of interdependence.

'Agape' still loves a person who does evil while hating the deed

At the center of the method of nonviolence stands the principle of love. Love is always the regulating ideal in the technique, in the method of nonviolence. This is the point at which the nonviolent resister follows the love and Savior Jesus Christ, for it is this love ethic that stands at the center of the Christian faith. And this stands as the regulating ideal for any move or for any struggle to change conditions of society. . . . Now I realize that to talk about love can be something very sentimental. I realize that it can end up as empty words. It's very easy to say love your oppressor. It's very easy to say love your enemy. It's very easy to say pray for those that despitefully use you, but it can be empty talk unless we understand the real meaning of this love. Now we all know, we must be frank enough to admit that you cannot love your enemy or your oppressor like you love your personal

23. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was, during the 1930s, the leader of a militant Islamic nonviolent movement in what was then called the North West Frontier, in what is now Afghanistan and Pakistan. Khan led the Pushtuns, or Pathans, in nonviolent struggle against the British and, by the end of the decade, had become one of Gandhi's key advisers.

24. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, translated by J. E. Turner (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), pp. 597–649.

friends, or like you love your wife, or your husband. And I don't think it means that. That is not the meaning of love at this point.

The Greek [language] helps us out a great deal. It talks about love in several senses. It talks about *eros*. And *eros* is a significant type of love, *eros* is a sign of aesthetic love. Plato talks about this love a great deal in his dialogue with Phaedrus. It is, it boils down to a romantic love. It is craving for something, and it has with it a bit of affection, an affectionate feeling.

And then there is another type of love that we talk about a great deal, it's a love that we have for personal friends. The Greek talks about it in *philia*. And it is a type of love, it stands on the basis of reciprocity. It has with it that mutual taint; it loves because it is loved. But then the Greek comes out with something higher, something that is strong, something that is more powerful than *eros* or any other type of love. It talks about *agape*. And *agape* is understanding goodwill for all men. *Agape* seeks nothing in return. It is a redemptive love. It is a love of God working within men. And so when men move to the point of *agape*, they love not because the individuals are so wealthful to them, not because it's anything they like so much about the individuals, but they love them because God loves them. They love them because they are wealthful to God, and this is the meaning of *agape*. It is a love that loves a person that does an evil deed while hating the deed that the person does. And this is the type of love that can redeem. It is a transforming love. And this is the type of love that we talk about, and that we are supposed to live about in this method of nonviolent resistance. It is a love that can change individuals. It can change nations. It can change conditions.

King, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony',
address at Green Lake, Wisconsin,
23 July 1956, in *Papers 3,* op. cit.

This is a protest – a *nonviolent* protest against injustice. We are depending on moral and spiritual forces. To put it another way, this is a movement of passive resistance, and the great instrument is the instrument of love. We feel that this is our chief weapon, and that no matter how long we are involved in the protest, no matter how tragic the experiences are, no matter what sacrifices we have to make, we will not let anybody drag us so low as to hate them.

Love *must* be at the forefront of our movement if it is to be a successful movement. And when we speak of love, we speak of understanding, good will toward *all* men. We speak of a creative, a redemptive sort of love, so that as we look at the problem, we see that the real tension is not between the Negro citizens and the white citizens of Montgomery, but it is a conflict between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and

the forces of darkness, and if there is a victory – and there *will* be a victory – the victory will not be merely for the Negro citizens and a defeat for the white citizens, but it will be a victory for justice and a defeat of injustice. It will be a victory for goodness in its long struggle with the forces of evil.

King, 'Walk for Freedom',
Fellowship, Vol. 22 (May 1956)

I still believe that love is the most durable power in the world. Over the centuries men have sought to discover the highest good. This has been the chief quest of ethical philosophy. This was one of the big questions of Greek philosophy. The Epicureans and the Stoics sought to answer it; Plato and Aristotle sought to answer it. What is the *summum bonum* of life? I think I have discovered the highest good. It is love. This principle stands at the center of the cosmos. As John says, 'God is love.' He who loves is a participant in the being of God. He who hates does not know God.

King, 'The Most Durable Power',
Christian Century, 5 June 1957

I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world. It is not an expression of impractical idealism, but of practical realism. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, love is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and religion enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love. Moreover, love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the 'fight fire with fire' method which you suggest is bitterness and chaos, the aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and creation of the beloved community. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create and organize anything permanent; only love can do that. Yes, love – which means understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill, even for one's enemies – is the solution to the race problem. Often love is crucified and buried in a grave, but in the long run it rises up and redeems even that which crucifies it.

King, 'Advice on Living',
Ebony, November 1957, p. 106

You work to defeat evil systems, but not the individuals who are caught up in those evil systems when we rise to love on the *agape* level. We love men not because we like them, not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but because God loves them. [I]n order to love our enemies, we must begin by analyzing ourselves. It may be that the person or persons who hate you, hate you because of something you have done unconsciously to

arouse that hate. So, begin by analyzing self. I realize that some people will hate you for no basic reason, for nothing that you have done. Some people will just not like the way you walk. Some people will just not like the way you talk. Some people will not like you because of the color of your skin. Some people will not like you because you can do your job better than they can do theirs. I realize all this, but over and above this, we must recognize the fact that some people may dislike you because of something you have done unconsciously, deep down in the past, to arouse this hate response. . . . So if we are to love our enemies – our individual enemies, our national enemies – we must start by analyzing ourselves and seeing if there is something within our system and within our individual lives that has brought about the hate response.

Secondly, in order to love our enemies, we must seek to discover the element of good within those persons that hate us. Whether we realize it or not, each of us has a schizophrenic personality. We are split up; we are divided against ourselves. . . . There is something within all of us that causes us to agree with Carlyle, 'There are depths in man that would go down to the lowest hell and heights which reach the highest heaven – were not both heaven and hell made out of him – everlasting mystery and miracle that he is'. . . . This simply means that there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we will begin to love all men. . . .

There is another thing that you must do to love your enemy. When the opportunity presents itself for you to defeat your enemy, and this opportunity will present itself sooner or later, you must not do it. For love in the final analysis means understanding creative good will to all men; it simply means that you will do nothing to defeat anybody.

King, 'Non-violence: The Christian Way in Human Relations',
Presbyterian Life, 8 February 1958, p. 12

Remarks to clergy and laity concerned about the war in Viet Nam

[W]hen I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am not speaking of some force which is just emotional. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of St John: 'Let us love one another; for love is God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.'

King, 'A Time to Break Silence',
New York, 4 April 1967,
in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*, op. cit., p. 242

Gandhi on *satyagraha*

***Satyagraha* was both sophisticated and filled with moral ramifications. It was the means for converting the power in nonviolence or *ahimsa* into political action. Subsequently translated as 'truth force', this phrasing might imply violence, which Gandhi did not mean to suggest. *Satyagraha* may therefore be best understood as meaning the power of truth – a concept equivalent to nonviolent direct action or nonviolent resistance.**

Part of the potency of nonviolent resistance can be seen in one of its results, a psychological phenomenon that is related to the self-suffering involved in the dynamics of nonviolent resistance. What kind of suffering did Gandhi and King have in mind? When, in a nonviolent campaign, discipline is maintained despite repression – or more suffering is taken on oneself than the pain imposed by the opponent – it has the effect of throwing the adversary off balance. The sight of unarmed resisters in the face of superior or military force may cause the general population to lose faith in those giving the orders to crack down on the nonviolent group. It may lose the opponent the support of its police or soldiers. This reaction of moral or political jiu-jitsu is one of the key effects from using *satyagraha* or nonviolent resistance (see 'A Note about Jiu-Jitsu' on page xv). Both Gandhi and King sought for ways to induce it.

Even the most despotic government cannot stand except for the consent of the governed which consent is often forcibly procured by the despot. Immediately the subject ceases to fear the despotic force, his power is gone.

Young India, 30 June 1920

Non-violence laughs at the might of the tyrant and stultifies him by non-retaliation. The might of the tyrant recoils upon himself when it meets with no response, even as an arm violently waved in the air suffers dislocation.

Young India, 20 October 1921

Satyagraha literally means insistence on truth. This insistence arms the votary with matchless power. This power or force is connoted by the word *Satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* to be genuine, may be offered against parents, against one's wife or one's children, against rulers, against fellow-citizens, even against the whole world.

'Some Rules of *Satyagraha*'
(originally in Gujarati, later translated into English),
Young India, 27 February 1930

Birth of 'satyagraha' in South Africa

It all began on a Sunday evening in Johannesburg when I sat on a hillock with another gentleman called Hemchandra. The memory of that day is so vivid that it might have been yesterday. At my side lay a Government *Gazette*. It contained the several clauses of the law concerning Indians. As

I read, I shook with rage. What did the government take us for? Then and there I produced a translation of that portion of the *Gazette* which contained the said laws and wrote under it: 'I will never let these laws govern me.' This was at once sent for publication to *Indian Opinion* at Phoenix. I did not dream at the time that even a single Indian would be capable of the unprecedented heroism the Indians revealed or that the *satyagraha* movement would gain the momentum it did.

Immediately I made my view known to fellow-Indians and many of them declared their readiness for *satyagraha*. In the first conflict, people took part under the impression that our aim would be gained after only a few days of suffering. In the second conflict, there were only a very few people to begin with, but later many more came along. Afterwards when, on the visit of Mr Gokhale, the Government of South Africa pledged itself to a settlement, the fight ceased. Later, the Government treacherously refused to honour its pledge; on which a third *satyagraha* battle became necessary. Gokhale at that time asked me how many people I thought would take part in the *satyagraha*. I wrote saying they would be between 30 and 60. But I could not find even that number. Only 16 of us took up the challenge. We were firmly decided that so long as the Government did not repeal its atrocious laws or make some settlement, we would accept every penalty, but would not submit. We had never hoped that we should find many fellow-fighters. But the readiness of one person without self-interest to offer himself for the cause of truth and country always has its effect. Soon there were twenty thousand people in the movement. There was no room for them in the prisons and the blood of India boiled. Many people say that if Lord Hardinge had not intervened, a compromise would have been impossible. But these people forget to ask themselves why it was that Lord Hardinge intervened. The sufferings of the Canadian Indians were far greater than those of the South African Indians. Why did he not use his good offices there? Where the spiritual might of thousands of men and women has been mustered, where innumerable men and women are eager to lay down their lives, what indeed is impossible? There was no other course open for Lord Hardinge than to offer mediation and he only showed his wisdom in adopting it.

What transpired later is well known to you: the Government of South Africa was compelled to come to terms with us. All of which goes to show that we can gain everything without hurting anybody and through soul-force or *satyagraha* alone. He who fights with arms has to depend on arms and on support from others. He has to turn from the straight path and seek tortuous tracks. The course that a *satyagrahi* adopts in his fight is straight and he need look to no one for help. He can, if necessary, fight by himself alone. In that case, it is true, the outcome will be somewhat delayed. If I had not found as many comrades in the South African fight as I did, all that would have happened is that you would not have seen me here in

your midst today. Perhaps all my life would have had to be spent in the struggle there. But what of that? The gain that has been secured would only have been a little late in coming. For the battle of *satyagraha* one only needs to prepare oneself. We have to have strict self-control. If it is necessary for this preparation to live in forests and caves, we should do so.

Gandhi, 'The Secret of *Satyagraha* in South Africa', Ahmedabad
(speech originally in Hindi, later translated into English),
in Ramchandra Verma, *Mahatma Gandhi*
(Bombay: Gandhi Hindi Pustak Shandar, 1978)

Suffering converts the opponent by opening his ears which are shut to reason

Up to the year 1906, I simply relied on appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. I was a good draftsman, as I always had a close grip of facts which in its turn was the necessary result of my meticulous regard for truth. But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived in South Africa. My people were excited; even a worm will and does sometimes turn – and there was talk of wreaking vengeance. I had then to choose between allying myself to violence or finding out some other method of meeting the crisis and stopping the rot, and it came to me that we should refuse to obey legislation that was degrading and let them put us in jail if they liked. Thus came into being the moral equivalent of war. I was then a loyalist, because I implicitly believed that the sum total of the activities of the British Empire was good for India and for humanity. Arriving in England soon after the outbreak of the war, I plunged into it and later when I was forced to go to India as a result of the pleurisy that I had developed, I led a recruiting campaign at the risk of my life, and to the horror of some of my friends. The disillusionment came in 1919 after the passage of the Black Rowlatt Act and the refusal of the Government to give the simple elementary redress of proved wrongs that we had asked for. And so, in 1920, I became a rebel. Since then the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I and I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword.

Young India, 5 November 1931

Every good movement passes through five stages, indifference, ridicule, abuse, repression, and respect. We had indifference for a few months. Then the Viceroy graciously laughed at it. Abuse, including misrepresentation, has been the order of the day. The Provincial Governors and the anti-non-co-operation Press have heaped as much abuse upon the Movement as they have been able to. Now comes repression, at present yet in its fairly mild form. Every movement that survives repression, mild or severe, invariably commands respect which is another name for success. The repression, if we are true, may be treated as a sure sign of the approaching victory. But, if we are true, we shall neither be cowed down nor angrily retaliate and be violent. *Violence is suicide*. Let us recognize that power dies hard, and that it is but natural for the Government to make a final effort for life even though it be through repression. Complete self-restraint at the present critical moment is the speediest way to success.

Young India, 9 March 1921

Exhaust all avenues before resorting to 'satyagraha'

Since *satyagraha* is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a *satyagrahi* exhausts all other means before he resorts to *satyagraha*. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to *satyagraha*.

Young India, 20 October 1927

Whether we are one or many, we must refuse to purchase freedom at the cost of our self-respect or our cherished convictions.

Young India, 15 December 1921

The soul is unconquered even when imprisoned

It is a fundamental principle of *Satyagraha* that the tyrant, whom the *Satyagrahi* seeks to resist, has power over his body and material possessions, but he can have no power over the soul. The soul can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned. The whole science of *Satyagraha* was born from a knowledge of this fundamental truth.

Young India, 21 May 1931

The only condition of a successful use of this force is a recognition of the existence of the soul as apart from the body and its permanent nature. And this recognition must amount to a living faith and not mere intellectual grasp.

Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, 4th ed.
(Madras: G. A. Natesan & Company, [1933]), p. 166

People demand historical evidence in support of *satyagraha*. History is for the most part a record of armed activities. Natural activities find very little mention in it. Only uncommon activities strike us with wonder. *Satyagraha* has been used always and in all situations. The father and the son, the man and the wife are perpetually resorting to *Satyagraha*, one towards the other. When a father gets angry and punishes the son, the son does not hit back with a weapon, he conquers his father's anger by submitting to him. The son refuses to be subdued by the unjust rule of his father, but he puts up with the punishment that he may incur through disobeying the unjust father. We can similarly free ourselves of the unjust rule of the Government by defying the unjust rule and accepting the punishments that go with it. We do not bear malice towards the Government. When we set its fears at rest, when we do not desire to make armed assaults on the administrators, nor to unseat them from power, but only to get rid of their injustice, they will at once be subdued to our will.

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 13, p. 523;
Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,*
op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 47

No place for fear

Just as in training for violence one learns to kill, similarly in adopting non-violence one should learn the art of dying. There is no place at all for fear in non-violence. Not only that, one has to develop the spirit of sacrifice to such a high degree that one would not hesitate to sacrifice one's family, property and even one's life. A votary of non-violence should fear God alone. One resorts to violence to protect one's physical body. But we should realize that the body is perishable and it is the soul which really matters. And in order to protect the honour of one's soul there is no alternative to non-violence.

'A Talk' (originally in Gujarati, later translated into English),
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 87, p. 407

Nonretaliation

We pretend to believe that retaliation is the Law of our Being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence, requiring elaborate regulating.

Young India, 9 March 1922

Freedom of a nation cannot be won by solitary acts of heroism even though they may be of the true type, never by heroism so called. The Temple of Freedom requires the patient, intelligent and constructive effort of tens of thousands of men and women, young and old.

Young India, 27 December 1928

To be generous means having no hatred for those whom we consider to be at fault, and loving and serving them. It is not generosity or love if we have goodwill for others only as long as they and we agree in thought and action. That is only amity or mutual affection. The use of the word 'love' is wrong in such cases. Let us call it friendship. 'Love' means friendly feeling for the enemy.

Blessing from Bapu

Letter to Ashram Women, 17 October 1927
(originally in Gujarati, later translated into English),
in *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 35, p. 164

In the dictionary of *Satyagraha*, there is no enemy. But as I have no desire to prepare a new dictionary for *Satyagrahis,* I use the old words giving them a new meaning. A *Satyagrahi* loves his so-called enemy even as his friend.

'Source of My Sympathy (11 September 1939)',
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 10, p. 170

The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice.

'Vykom Satyagraha',
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 26, p. 159

Rules for political controversy

A friend sends me the following:

'It will be very helpful if you will kindly guide your followers about their conduct when they have to engage in a political controversy. Your guidance on the following points is particularly needed.

(a) Vilification so as to lower the opponent in public estimation.
(b) Kind of criticism of the opponent permissible.
(c) Limit to which hostility should be carried.
(d) Whether effort should be made to gain office and power.'

I have said before in these pages that I claim no followers. It is enough for me to be my own follower. It is by itself a sufficiently taxing performance. But I know that many claim to be my followers. I must therefore answer the questions for their sakes. If they will follow what I endeavour to stand for rather than me they will see that the following answers are derived from truth and *ahimsa*.

(a) Vilification of a opponent there can never be. But this does not exclude a truthful characterization of his acts. An opponent is not always a bad man because he opposes. He may be as honourable as we may claim to be and yet there may be vital differences between him and us.
(b) Our criticism will therefore be if we *believe* him to be guilty of untruth to meet it with truth, of discourtesy with courtesy, of bullying

with calm courage, of violence with suffering, of arrogance with humility, of evil with good. 'My follower' would seek not to condemn but to convert.

(c) There is no question of any limit to which hostility may be carried. For there should be no hostility to persons. Hostility there must be to acts when they are subversive of morals or the good of society.

(d) Office and power must be avoided. Either may be accepted when it is clearly for greater service.

'For Followers', *Young India*, 7 May 1931;
Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*,
op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 233

The blind, lame, maimed

If I have to win *swaraj* [political independence] non-violently I must discipline my people. The maimed and the blind and the leprous cannot join the army of violence. There is also an age limit for serving in the army. For a non-violent struggle there is no age limit: the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden may serve, and not only men but women also. When the spirit of non-violence pervades the people and actually begins to work, its effect is visible to all.

Interview with Professor Benjamin E. Mays,
Harijan, 20 March 1937

Bid goodbye to fear

A *satyagrahi* bids goodbye to fear. He is, therefore, never afraid to trust the opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the *satyagrahi* is ready to trust him the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed.

Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, translated by
Valji Govindji Desai (Ahmedabad, 1928), p. 246

There is no need to define truth; of non-violence I do not demand any very exacting interpretation in this context. We should bear no ill will towards those from whom we wish to obtain justice; we should not seek our end by using violence against them or causing them any injury, but through courtesy, though remaining unshaken in our resolve; this is all I mean by non-violence here and only so much of it is necessary for bringing about reforms of this kind.

Navajivan, 14 September 1919

Never an army of perfectly nonviolent people

Let no one understand that a non-violent army is open only to those who strictly enforce in their lives all the implications of non-violence. It is open to all those who accept the implications and make an ever-increasing

endeavour to observe them. There never will be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe non-violence.

Harijan, 21 July 1940

The *Satyagrahi*, whilst he is ever ready for fight, must be equally eager for peace. He must welcome any honourable opportunity for peace. . . . The essential condition of a compromise is that there should be nothing humiliating, nothing panicky about it.

Young India, 19 March 1931

Suffer unto death

Love does not burn others, it burns itself. Therefore, a *Satyagrahi*, that is, a civil resister, will joyfully suffer even unto death.

Young India, 27 February 1930

Nonviolent resistance is obedience of the highest law

Satyagrahi is nothing if not instinctively law-abiding: and it is his law-abiding nature which exacts from him implicit obedience to the highest law, that is, the Voice of Conscience, which overrides all other laws. His civil disobedience, even of certain laws, is only seeming disobedience.

Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*, op. cit., p. 415

'Satyagraha' is as old as the hills

Satyagraha, as conceived by me, is a science in the making. It may be that what I claim to be a science, may prove to be no science at all, and may well prove to be the musings and doings of a fool, if not a mad man. It may be that what is true in *Satyagraha*, is as ancient as the hills.

Harijan, 24 September 1938

The fact of the matter is that we do not know our distant goal. It will be determined not by our definitions but by our acts, voluntary and involuntary. If we are wise, we will take care of the present and the future will take care of itself. God has given us only a limited sphere of action and a limited vision. Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof.

Young India, 12 January 1928

In every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts but it is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed – they all stood alone like many others whom I can name. But they had living faith in themselves and their God, and believing as they did that God was on their side, they never felt lonely.

Young India, 10 October 1929

Secrecy versus transparency

All sins are committed in secrecy. The moment we realize that God witnesses even our thoughts, we shall be free.

Young India, 5 June 1924

As a *Satyagrahi* I must always allow my cards to be examined and re-examined at all times, and make reparation if an error is discovered.

Harijan, 11 March 1939

Hatred

I believe that it is impossible to end hatred with hatred.

Navajivan, 23 November 1924

A 'satyagrahi' never misses a chance for compromise

A *Satyagrahi* never misses, can never miss a chance of compromise on honourable terms, it being always assumed that in the event of failure he is ever ready to offer battle. He dare not always distrust his opponents. On the contrary, he must grasp the hand of friendship whenever there is the slightest pretext.

Young India, 16 April 1931

Duties of 'satyagrahis'

There must be common honesty among *satyagrahis.*

- They must render heart discipline to their commander.
- There should be no mental reservation.
- They must be prepared to lose all, not merely their personal liberty, not merely their possessions, land, cash, etc. but also the liberty and possessions of their families, and they must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets, or even slow death by torture.
- They must not be violent in thought, word or deed towards the 'enemy' or among themselves.

Harijan, 22 October 1938

It is the essence of *satyagraha* that those who are suffering should alone offer it. Cases can be conceived when what may be termed sympathetic *satyagraha* may be legitimately applied. The idea underlying *satyagraha* is to convert the wrongdoer, to awaken the sense of justice in him, to show him also that without the co-operation direct, or indirect, of the wronged the wrong-doer cannot do the wrong intended by him. If the people in either case are not ready to suffer for their causes, no outside help in the shape of *satyagraha* can possibly bring true deliverance.

Harijan, 10 December 1938

If there is one true *Satyagrahi*, it would be enough. I am trying to be that true *Satyagrahi*.

Harijan, 20 January 1940

The measure of 'satyagraha'

If we were to cast a retrospective glance over our past life, we would find that out of a thousand of our acts affecting our families, in nine hundred and ninety-nine we were dominated by truth, that in our deeds, it is not right to say we generally resort to untruth or ill will. It is only where a conflict of interest arises, then arise the progeny of untruth, namely, anger, ill will, etc., and then we see nothing but poison in our midst. A little hard thinking will show us that the standard that we apply to the regulation of domestic relations is the standard that should be applied to regulate the relations between rulers and the ruled, and between man and man. Those men and women who do not recognize the domestic tie are considered to be very like brutes or barbarous, even though they in form have the human body. They have never known the law of *satyagraha*. Those who recognize the domestic tie and its obligations have to a certain extent gone beyond that brute stage. But if challenged, they would say 'what do we care though the whole universe may perish so long as we guard the family interest?' The measure of their *satyagraha*, therefore, is less than that of a drop in the ocean.

Gandhi, *Satyagraha: Its Significance*
(New Delhi: Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya)
(Satyagraha Leaflet Series, No. 6)

King on the necessity of sacrifice and struggle

Time and again, King instilled in his listeners an understanding of Gandhian principles, interpreted through the biblical ethos of the black South with its theology of freedom that had evolved from slavery. He chooses 'soul force', rather than *satyagraha*, to translate the term's literal meaning of 'truth force.' In the following selections, King is also explaining, in effect, how suffering can result in moral or political jiu-jitsu. His words on sacrifice resonate with Gandhi's call for *satyagraha*, yet he also brings to bear a uniquely Christian concept of redemption – the idea that through the self-giving of Christ, one is ransomed and no longer held hostage to sin.

Birmingham: the first time we've been able to fill the jails

7 May 1963, Birmingham, Alabama

Ladies and gentleman I would like to say briefly that the activities which have taken place in Birmingham over the last few days mark the nonviolent movement coming of age. This is the first time on the history of our struggle that we have been able to fill the jails. In a real sense this is the fulfillment of a dream because I've always felt that if we could fill the jails in our

witness for freedom it would be a marvelous expression of the determination of the Negroes and a marvelous way to lay the whole issue before the conscience of the local and national community. I think in a real sense this Birmingham movement is one of the most inspiring moments in the whole nonviolent struggle in the US.

This address, in New York City, was to the annual luncheon of the National Committee for Rural Schools, which sought to improve and equalize public education in the rural South. King says that self-respect and willingness to suffer will cause the oppressors to become ashamed, transforming enemies into friends.

We must somehow confront physical force with soul *force* and stand up courageously for justice and freedom. And this dynamic unity, this amazing self-respect, this willingness to suffer and this refusal to hit back will cause the oppressors to become ashamed of their own methods and we will be able to transform enemies into friends. We will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of injustice to the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and goodwill. We can do this if we protest courageously, if we stand up with courage, if we stand up nonviolently. And this is the thing which will make integration a reality in our nation. This is the challenge that stands before all of us. If we will do this we will be able by the help of God to create a new world. A world in which men will be able to live together as brothers. A world in which men 'will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.' A world in which men will no longer take necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. A world in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality. And that will be the day when all of us will be able to stand up and sing with new meaning: 'My country 'tis of thee, / Sweet land of liberty, / Of thee I sing / Land where my fathers died, / Land of the pilgrim's pride, / From every mountain side, / Let freedom ring.'

King, 'Desegregation and the Future',
National Committee for Rural Schools, New York,
15 December 1956, in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

Unmerited suffering is redemptive

The nonviolent resister accepts suffering without retaliation. He willingly accepts suffering. The nonviolent resister realizes that unearned suffering is redemptive; he is willing to receive violence, but he never goes out as a perpetrator of violence. He comes to see that suffering does something to the sufferer as well as the inflicter of the suffering. . . .

King, 'Non-violence and Racial Justice',
Friends Journal, 26 July 1958

History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive. The innocent blood of these little girls may well serve as a redemptive force that will bring light to this dark city. The holy Scripture says, 'A child shall lead them.' The death of these little children may lead our whole Southland from the low road of man's inhumanity to man to the high road of peace and brotherhood. These tragic deaths may lead our nation to substitute an aristocracy of character for an aristocracy of color. The spilt blood of these innocent girls may cause the whole citizenry of Birmingham to transform the negative extremes of a dark past into the positive extremes of a bright future. Indeed, this tragic event may cause the white South to come to terms with its conscience.

So in spite of the darkness of this hour we must not despair. We must not become bitter; nor must we harbor the desire to retaliate with violence. We must not lose faith in our white brothers. Somehow we must believe that the most misguided among them can learn to respect the dignity and worth of all human personality.

King, 'Eulogy for Martyred Children', Birmingham, Alabama,
22 September 1963, Martin Luther King Jr
Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta; in Washington (ed.),
A Testament of Hope, op. cit., pp. 221–2

We will wear you down with our capacity to suffer

We must stand up with organized mass nonviolent action, refusing to cooperate with evil, refusing to cooperate with segregation, and at the same time having love in our hearts. We must somehow say to our brothers in the South, 'We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will match your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you. Yet, we will not obey your evil laws. Do what you want. Bomb our homes; threaten the lives of our children; and we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators into our communities late at night and take us on the side of some desolate road and leave us there, and we still love you. Run all over the country and indulge in hate campaigns and propaganda campaigns, and make it appear we are not culturally or intellectually or morally for integration, and yet we will wear you down with our capacity to suffer. Yes, in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory. We will win our freedom and at the same time win the hearts of those who have deprived us of our freedom!'

King, 'Love Your Enemies',
address to National Council of Negro Women,
Washington, D.C., 10 November 1957,
in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University, Boston

Our suffering will leave the oppressor glutted with his own barbarity

I realize that this approach will mean suffering and sacrifice. Some will ask, what if these acts of violence continue and increase as a result of the Negro following this method? What then can be his defense? How can he face the violence that will come to him as a result of his standing up? His defense is to meet every act of violence towards an individual Negro with the fact that there are thousands of others who will present themselves in his place as potential victims. If the oppressors bomb the home of one Negro for his courage, then this must be met by the fact that they will be required to bomb the homes of hundreds and thousands of Negroes. They deny; if they deny bread and milk to Negro children whose parents want them to be free, then they must be required to deny these children every necessity of life – water and air itself. This dynamic unity, this amazing self-respect, this willingness to suffer and this refusal to hit back, will soon cause the oppressor to become ashamed of his own method. You will leave him glutted with his own barbarity. You will force him to stand before the world and his God splattered with the blood and reeking with the stench of his Negro brother. . . .

King, 'Look to the Future',
address to National Council of Negro Women,
Washington, D.C., 10 November 1967,
manuscript in Martin Luther King Jr
Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

The internal fiber to stand up amid anything we have to face

Freedom never comes easy. It comes through hard labor and it comes through toil. It comes through hours of despair and disappointment. And that's the way it goes. There is no crown without a cross. I wish we could get to Easter without going to Good Friday, but history tells us that we've got to go by Good Friday before we can get to Easter. That's the long story of freedom, isn't it? Before you get to a Red Sea to confront, you have a hardened heart of a Pharoah to confront, you have the prodigious hilltops of evil in the wilderness to confront. And even when you get up to the promised land, you have giants in the land. The beautiful thing about it is that there are a few people who've been over in the land, they have spied enough to say, even though the giants are there we can possess the land, because we got the internal fiber to stand up amid anything we have to face.

King, sermon on independence of Ghana,
delivered at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church,
Martin Luther King Jr
Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

We are ready to risk our lives

Its opponents are revealed as the instigators and practitioners of violence if it occurs. Then public support is magnetically attracted to the advocates of nonviolence, while those who employ violence are literally disarmed by overwhelming sentiment against their stand. . . . Here nonviolence comes as the ultimate form of persuasion. It is the method which seeks to implement the just law by appealing to the conscience of the great decent majority who through blindness, fear, pride, or irrationality have allowed their consciences to sleep. The nonviolent resisters can summarize their message in the following simple terms: We will take direct action against injustice without waiting for other agencies to act. We will not obey unjust laws or submit to unjust practices. We will do this peacefully, openly, cheerfully because our aim is to persuade. We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts. We will always be willing to talk and seek fair compromise, but we are ready to suffer if necessary and even risk our lives to become witnesses to the truth as we see it.

King, *Stride toward Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 214–17

King was a featured speaker at the forty-seventh annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and addressed more than a thousand delegates from thirty-five states. 'We are willing to fill up the jails,' he explains in discussing the emergence of a 'brand new Negro in the South', who has been 'freed from the paralysis of crippling fear'. He concludes with an appeal for nonviolent resistance, in this case termed *passive resistance* – a term King later abandoned as inaccurate, just as Gandhi had dropped it.

Wherever segregation exists we must be willing to stand up in mass and courageously and nonviolently protest against it. And I might say that I must admit that this means sacrifice and suffering, yes. It might even mean going to jail. But if it means going to jail, we must be willing to fill up the jail houses of the South. Yes, it might even mean physical death. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free our children from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing could be more honorable. This is really the meaning of passive resistance. It confronts physical force with an even greater force, namely, soul force.

King, 'The Montgomery Story', address delivered at the forty-seventh annual NAACP convention, San Francisco, 27 June 1956, in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

King delivered a stirring address to more than 2,000 participants in the Montgomery bus boycott at a mass meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association, held at the Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy's First Baptist Church.

We don't advocate violence. WE WILL STAY WITHIN THE LAW. When we are RIGHT, WE DON'T MIND GOING TO JAIL! If all I have to pay is going to jail a few times and getting about 20 threatening calls a day, I think that is a very small price to pay for what we are fighting for. (Applause loud and long.)

Notes taken by Willie Mae Lee at the mass meeting in Montgomery on 30 January 1956, in the Preston Valien Collection, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans

We must revolt against the peace of stagnant complacency

A few weeks ago, a Federal Judge handed down an edict which stated in substance that the University of Alabama could no longer deny admission to persons because of their race. With the handing down of this decision, a brave young lady by the name of Autherine Lucy was accepted as the first Negro student to be admitted in the history of the University of Alabama. This was a great moment and a great decision. But with the announcement of this decision, 'the vanguards of the old order began to surge.' The forces of evil began to congeal. As soon as Autherine Lucy walked on the campus, a group of spoiled students led by Leonard Wilson and a vicious group of outsiders began threatening her on every hand. Crosses were burned; eggs and bricks were thrown at her. The mob jumped on top of the car in which she was riding. Finally, the president and trustees of the University of Alabama asked Autherine to leave for her own safety and the safety of the University. The next day after Autherine was dismissed, the paper came out with this headline: 'Things are quiet in Tuscaloosa today. There is peace on the campus of the University of Alabama.'

Yes, things are quiet in Tuscaloosa. Yes, there was peace on the campus, but it was peace at a great price: it was peace that had been purchased at the exorbitant price of an inept trustee board succumbing to the whims and caprices of a vicious mob. It was peace that had been purchased at the price of allowing mobocracy to reign supreme over democracy. It was peace that had been purchased at the price of capitulating to the force of darkness. This is the type of peace that all men of goodwill hate. It is the type of peace that is obnoxious. It is the type of peace that stinks in the nostrils of the Almighty God.

Now let me hasten to say that this is not a concession to or a justification for physical war. I can see no moral justification for that type of war. I believe absolutely and positively that violence is self-defeating. War is devastating and we know now that if we continue to use these weapons of destruction, our civilization will be plunged across the abyss of destruction.

However, this is a type of war that every Christian is involved in. It is a spiritual war. It is a war of ideas. Every true Christian is a fighting pacifist.

In a very profound passage which has been often misunderstood, Jesus utters this: He says, 'Think not that I am come to bring peace. I come

not to bring peace but a sword.' Certainly, He is not saying that He comes not to bring peace in the higher sense. What He is saying is: 'I come not to bring this peace of escapism, this peace that fails to confront the real issues of life, the peace that makes for stagnant complacency.' Then He says, 'I come to bring a sword' not a physical sword. Whenever I come, a conflict is precipitated between the old and the new, between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. I come to declare war over injustice. I come to declare war on evil. Peace is not merely the absence of some negative force – war, tension, confusion – but it is the presence of some positive force – justice, goodwill, the power of the kingdom of God.

I had a long talk with a man the other day about this bus situation. He discussed the peace being destroyed in the community, the destroying of good race relations. I agree that it is more tension now. But peace is not merely the absence of this tension, but the presence of justice. And even if we didn't have this tension, we still wouldn't have positive peace. Yes, it is true that if the Negro accepts his place, accepts exploitation and injustice, there will be peace. But it would be a peace boiled down to stagnant complacency, deadening passivity, and if peace means this, I don't want peace.

(1) If peace means accepting second-class citizenship, I don't want it.
(2) If peace means keeping my mouth shut in the midst of injustice and evil, I don't want it.
(3) If peace means being complacently adjusted to a deadening status quo, I don't want peace.
(4) If peace means a willingness to be exploited economically, dominated politically, humiliated and segregated, I don't want peace. So in a passive, nonviolent manner, we must revolt against this peace.

Jesus says in substance, I will not be content until justice, goodwill, brotherhood, love, yes, the Kingdom of God are established upon the earth. This is real peace – a peace embodied with the presence of positive good. The inner peace that comes as a result of doing God's will.

King, 'When Peace Becomes Obnoxious',
Louisville Defender, 29 March 1956

Freedom must be demanded by the oppressed

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was 'well-timed', according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the words 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never'.

King, 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail', 16 April 1963,
in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*,
op. cit., p. 292

Gandhi on means and ends

Crucial to understanding Gandhi is a grasp of his profound and explicit rejection of the traditional view that one's method can be separated from the results achieved. Gandhi is not merely arguing that a good purpose does not justify morally bankrupt or violent means. He is completely repudiating any possibility of differentiating between the methods used and the purpose or goal. In his view, the means of action – the techniques or tools – should embody the purpose. The means and ends may be protracted over time but they cannot be cut into two sections; they are one and the same. His further stipulation is that the techniques chosen should reveal the goal. When Gandhi's views on the means and ends are examined today, they are remarkably revealing on how lasting bitterness can be avoided and the cycle of violence be broken.

I have never believed, and I do not now believe, that the end justifies the means. On the contrary, it is my firm conviction that there is an intimate connection between the end and the means, so much so that you cannot achieve a good end by bad means.

Young India, 11 August 1921

They say 'means are after all means.' I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.

Young India, 17 July 1924

Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahimsa*. But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahimsa* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill of anybody. Without *ahimsa* it is not possible to seek and find Truth. *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse and which is the reverse? Nevertheless, *ahimsa* is the means and Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *ahimsa* becomes our supreme duty and Truth becomes God for us.

Young India, 7 May 1931

June 26, 1933
M. Asaf Ali, Esq.
Barrister-at-law, Kucha Chelan,
Delhi

My Dear Asaf Ali,

I want you, however, to understand my fundamental difficulty which constitutes also my limitation. Non-violence for me is not a mere experiment. It is part of my life and the whole of the creed of *satyagraha*, non-co-operation civil disobedience, and the like are necessary deductions from the fundamental proposition that non-violence is the law of life for human beings. For me it is both a means and an end and I am more than ever convinced that in the complex situation that faces India, there is no other way of gaining real freedom.

Yours sincerely,
MKG

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 55, p. 221

Terrorism

Terrorism must be held to be wrong in every case. In other words, pure motive can never justify impure or violent action.

Young India, 18 December 1924

Truth and 'ahimsa'

Ahimsa [non-violence] and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Nevertheless, *ahimsa* is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *ahimsa* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point final victory is beyond question. Whatever difficulties we encounter, whatever apparent reverses we sustain, we may not give up the quest for Truth which alone is, being God Himself.

Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir – Ashram Observances,*
translated by Valji Govindji Desai
(Ahmedabad: Jivanji Desai, 1935), p. 13

Truth is the goal

There again you are wrong. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is not the goal. Truth is the goal. But we have no means of realizing truth in human relationships except through the practice of *ahimsa*. A steadfast pursuit of *ahimsa* is inevitably bound to truth – not so violence. That is why I swear by *ahimsa.* Truth came naturally to me. *Ahimsa* I acquired after a struggle. But *ahimsa* being the means we are naturally more concerned with it in our everyday

life. It is *ahimsa*, therefore, that our masses have to be educated in. Education in truth follows from it as a natural end.

'Talk With a Friend', *Harijan*, 23 June 1946

If any action of mine claimed to be spiritual is proved to be unpracticable it must be pronounced to be a failure. I do believe that the most spiritual act is the most practical in the true sense of the term.

Harijan, 1 July 1939

End of nonviolent war

The end of non-violent 'war' is always an agreement, never dictation, much less humiliation of the opponent.

Harijan, 23 March 1940

King on means and ends

For King, the first principle for the civil rights movement was that the 'means must be as pure as the end'. As he viewed it, 'the end represents the means in process and the ideal in the making'.[25] This originated with Gandhi's rejection of any differentiation between the method and the goal. King's own ethical framework coincided with the Mahatma's views, and he thought it impossible to use destructive methods and achieve constructive results. Just as it was important at the start of a struggle to reach out to the opponent or persuade one's antagonist, reconciliation was essential at its end. This meant preparation and planning.

So concerned was King with this principle that he worried that the successes of the civil rights movement might lead to gloating. He warned against developing the mentality of victors and regarded such a possibility as a danger and betrayal of the movement's basic goals. Each step, thought King, should reflect the type of community envisioned. To achieve a nonviolent community, you must practice nonviolence. This congruity is an essential part of King's concept of the beloved community.

Modern man has built a complex and awe-inspiring civilization. One after another the forces of the universe have been harnessed for our service.

Yet there is something missing. In spite of man's tremendous mastery over the scientific means of life, there is an appalling lack of mastery over those primitive forces of social stagnation which result in wars and conflicts between races, nations and religious groups.

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25. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience', address originally given on 16 November 1961, in James Melvin Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1986), p. 45.

The world grows smaller as science advances. The elements of life are being welded by the synthesis of time. Yet, man stumbles along vainly trying to maintain racial, social and political separateness, to perpetuate ideas and systems that degrade human personality. How much of our modern life is summarized in that great phrase of Thoreau – 'improved means to an unimproved end.'

Unless we can reestablish the moral ends for living in personal character and social justice, our civilization will destroy itself by the misuse of its own instruments. In a world of thermonuclear weapons, the alternative to understanding, goodwill and brotherhood may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation. The greatest need in the world today is for modern man to keep the moral and ethical ends for which he lives abreast with the scientific and technical means by which he lives.

King, 'What Is Our Greatest Need?', *New York Times Magazine*, 2 April 1961, pp. 7, 38[26]

King delivered this historic address at Riverside Church in New York City, at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned about the War in Vietnam, exactly one year before his assassination. In his sermon, he directly attacks, for the first time, the Johnson administration's policy on Viet Nam and links the struggle for civil rights with the antiwar movement. It is also an ardent statement on how 'the means represent the ideal in the making' and criticism of conventional military-strategic thinking.

Now let me say, secondly, that if we are to have peace in the world, men and nations must embrace the nonviolent affirmation that ends and means must cohere. One of the great philosophical debates of history has been over the whole question of means and ends. And there have always been those who argued that the end justifies the means, that the means aren't really important. The important thing is to get to the end, you see.

So, if you're seeking to develop a just society, they say, the important thing is to get there, and the means are really unimportant; any means will do so long as they get you there – they may be violent, they may be untruthful means; they may even be unjust means to a just end. There have been those who have argued this throughout history. But we will never have peace in the world until men everywhere recognize that ends are not cut off from means, because the means represent the ideal in the making, and the end in process, and ultimately you can't reach good ends through evil means, because the means represent the seed and the end represents the tree.

It's one of the strangest things that all the great military geniuses of the world have talked about peace. The conquerors of old who came killing

26. Part of a collection of ten essays by figures in various fields.

in pursuit of peace, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon, were akin in seeking a peaceful world order. If you will read *Mein Kampf* closely enough, you will discover that Hitler contended that everything he did in Germany was for peace. And the leaders of the world today talk eloquently about peace. Every time we drop our bombs in North Vietnam, President Johnson talks eloquently about peace. What is the problem? They are talking about peace as a distant goal, as an end we seek, but one day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. All of this is saying that, in the final analysis, means and ends must cohere because the end is preexistent in the means, and ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends.

King, 'A Time to Break Silence', New York, 4 April 1967, in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*, op. cit., p. 231

As I like to say in Montgomery, the tension in Montgomery is not between seventy thousand white people and fifty thousand Negroes. The tension is at bottom a tension between justice and injustice. It is a tension between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. And if there is a victory, it will not be a victory merely for fifty thousand Negroes. If there is a victory for integration in America, it will not be a victory merely for sixteen million Negroes, but it will be a victory for justice, a victory for good will, a victory for democracy.

King, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony', in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

The Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) reprinted and distributed the following article, with an introduction by James Peck, a white member of CORE who was knocked unconscious in the freedom rides and received fifty surgical stitches. He was the only freedom rider who participated in CORE's 1947 Journey of Reconciliation and the 1961 rides.

The basic conflict is not really over the buses. Yet we believe that, if the method we use in dealing with equality in the buses can eliminate injustice within ourselves, we shall at the same time be attacking the basis of injustice – man's hostility to man. This can only be done when we challenge the white community to reexamine its assumptions as we are now prepared to reexamine ours.

We do not wish to triumph over the white community. That would only result in transferring those now on the bottom to the top. But, if we can live up to nonviolence in thought and deed, there will emerge an interracial society based on freedom for all.

King, 'Our Struggle', *Liberation*, April 1956, pp. 3–6

There is another basic point about this technique of passive resistance and it is this: That this method, in this method, the nonviolent resister seeks to lift or rather to change the opponent, to redeem him. He does not seek to defeat him or to humiliate him. And I think this is very important, that the end is never merely to protest but the end is reconciliation. And there is never the purpose behind – this method is never to defeat or to humiliate the opponent. Now the method of violence seeks to humiliate and to defeat the opponents, and therefore it leads to bitterness. The aftermath of the method of violence is bitterness. But the method of nonviolence seeks not to humiliate and not to defeat the oppressor, but it seeks to win his friendship and his understanding. And thereby and therefore the aftermath of this method is reconciliation.

King, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony',
in *Papers 3,* op. cit.

In this sermon at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King reads a fictional letter from the Apostle Paul to American Christians of the mid-twentieth century. Fashioned after Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, King's sermon notes the gap between the nation's scientific progress and its ethical and spiritual development. Deploring the exploitive tendencies of capitalism, the moral absolutism of both Protestants and Roman Catholics, the evils of racial segregation and the egotism of self-righteousness, King offers the remedy of Christian Love. 'Only through achieving this love', King says, 'can you expect to matriculate into the university of eternal life.' The sermon also expresses King's adoption of Gandhi's belief that the means and ends are interrelated and inseparable. King had earlier delivered the sermon on 7 September 1956 at the National Baptist Convention, where John Lewis heard it on black radio, at home in Troy, Alabama, and as a result decided to commit himself to the civil rights struggle, subsequently chairing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Always be sure that you struggle with Christian methods and Christian weapons. Never succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapon of love. Let no man pull you so low as to hate him. Always avoid violence. If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in your struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

In your struggle for justice, let your oppressor know that you are not attempting to defeat or humiliate him, or even to pay him back for injustices that he has heaped upon you. Let him know that you are merely seeking justice for him as well as yourself. Let him know that the festering sore of segregation debilitates the white man as well as the Negro. With

this attitude you will be able to keep your struggle on high Christian standards.

King, 'Paul's Letter to American Christians',
sermon delivered in Montgomery, Alabama,
4 November 1956, in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

And it's a beautiful thing, isn't it that . . . [Ghana] that is now free and it is free without rising up with arms and with ammunition. It is free through nonviolent means. Because of that the British Empire will not have the bitterness for Ghana that she has for China, so to speak. Because of that when the British Empire leaves Ghana, she leaves with a different attitude than she would have left with if she had been driven out by armies. We've got to revolt in such a way that after revolt is over we can live with people as their brothers and their sisters. . . . The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, the aftermath of nonviolence is redemption, the aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation; the aftermath of violence is every bitterness.

King, 'The Birth of a New Nation',
Liberation, 28 April 1957

Gandhi on the tools of nonviolent struggle

A primary tool of nonviolent struggle, civil disobedience is used when other techniques have been exhausted. It can be employed by individuals, groups or mass movements. It may be directed toward particular policies, laws, regimes, authorities or practices. Gandhi considered it an inherent right of citizenship – a means of self-sacrifice to raise awareness of a specific wrong, rebellion without violence. Intrinsic to civil disobedience is the acceptance of full punishment as evidence of the immorality of the intended provision or government.

Because of the absolute necessity to accept the penalties for defiance, discipline is a central requirement of civil disobedience. Gandhi said, in 1934, that there was no reason why masses of people, if disciplined, should not be able to show the same discipline that an army does.[27]

The inherent right of a citizen

I wish I could persuade everybody that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. . . . Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal disobedience can lead to it. Every State puts down criminal disobedience by force. It perishes, if it does not. But to put down civil

27. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 3 August 1934; Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), p. 196, as cited in Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 94, 117 note 24.

disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. Civil disobedience can only lead to strength and purity. A civil resister never uses arms and hence he is harmless to a State that is at all willing to listen to the voice of public opinion. He is dangerous for an autocratic State, for he brings about its fall by engaging public opinion upon the matter for which he resists the State. Civil disobedience, therefore, becomes a sacred duty when the State has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barters with such a State shares its corruption or lawlessness.

It is, therefore, possible to question the wisdom of applying civil disobedience in respect of a particular act or law; it is possible to advise delay and caution. But the right itself cannot be allowed to be questioned. It is a birthright that cannot be surrendered without surrender of one's self-respect.

At the same time that the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case.

Young India, 5 January 1922

Only when a citizen has disciplined himself in the art of voluntary obedience to the State laws is he justified on rare occasions deliberately, but non-violently, to disobey them and expose himself to the penalty of their breach.

Young India, 17 November 1921

24 October 1931

You might of course say that there can be no non-violent rebellion and there has been none known to history. Well, it is my ambition to provide an instance and it is my dream that my country may win its freedom through non-violence. And, I would like to repeat to the whole world times without number that I will not purchase my country's freedom at the cost of non-violence. My marriage with non-violence is such an absolute thing that I would rather commit suicide than be deflected from my position.

Talk at Oxford, *Young India*, 12 November 1931

Rebellion without violence

Complete civil disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it. An out-and-out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the State. He becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every unmoral State law. Thus, for instance, he may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognize the authority in his daily intercourse. He may refuse to obey the law of trespass and claim to enter military barracks in order to speak to the soldiers, he may refuse to submit to limitations upon the manner of picketing and may picket within the proscribed area. In doing all this he never uses force and never resists force when it is used against him. In fact, he invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself. This he does because and when he

finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys to be an intolerable burden. He argues to himself that a State allows personal freedom only in so far as the citizen submits to its regulations. Submission to the State law is the price a citizen pays for his personal liberty. Submission, therefore, to a State law wholly or largely unjust is an immoral barter for liberty. A citizen who thus realizes the evil nature of a State is not satisfied to live on its sufferance, and therefore appears to the others who do not share his belief to be a nuisance to society whilst he is endeavouring to compel the State, without committing a moral breach, to arrest him. Thus considered, civil resistance is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish and an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil State. Is not this the history of all reform? Have not reformers, much to the disgust of their fellows, discarded even innocent symbols associated with an evil practice?

When a body of men disown the State under which they have hitherto lived, they nearly establish their own government. I say nearly, for they do not go to the point of using force when they are resisted by the State. Their 'business', as of the individual, is to be locked up or shot by the State, unless it recognizes their separate existence, in other words bows to their will. Thus three thousand Indians in South Africa after due notice to the Government of the Transvaal crossed the Transvaal border in 1914 in defiance of the Transvaal Immigration Law and compelled the government to arrest them. When it failed to provoke them to violence or to coerce them into submission, it yielded to their demands. A body of civil resisters is, therefore, like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of want of excitement of an ordinary soldier's life. And as a civil resistance army is or ought to be free from passion because free from the spirit of retaliation, it requires the fewest number of soldiers. Indeed one *perfect* civil resister is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong.

Young India, 10 November 1921

A sign, a glance, silence

Non-violence is not a mechanical thing. You don't become non-violent by merely saying 'I shall not use force.' It must be felt in the heart. There must be within you an upwelling of love and pity towards the wrong-doer. When there is that feeling it will express itself through some action. It may be a sign, a glance, even silence. But such as it is, it will melt the heart of the wrong-doer and check the wrong.

Harijan, 9 March 1940

. . . only Truth quenches untruth, Love quenches anger, self-suffering quenches violence. This eternal rule is a rule not for saints only, but for all. Those who observe it may be few, but they are the salt of the earth . . .

'Speech at Chokhamela Boarding House, Nagpur, 24 January 1942',
Harijan, 1 February 1942,
in *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 75, p. 255

My fight continued even when I was lodged behind prison bars
23 October 1938

If you have really understood the meaning of non-violence, it should be clear to you that non-violence is not a principle or a virtue to be brought into play on a particular occasion or to be practised with reference to a particular party or section. It has to become a part and parcel of our being. Anger should disappear from our hearts altogether, otherwise what is the difference between ourselves and our oppressors? Anger may lead one person to issue an order to open fire, another to use abusive language, a third one to use the *lathi*. At root it is all the same. It is only when you have become incapable of feeling or harbouring anger in your hearts that you can claim to have shed violence or can expect to remain non-violent to the end. . . . Our civil disobedience or non-co-operation, by its very nature, was not meant to be practised for all time. But the fight which we are today putting up through our constructive non-violence has a validity for all time; it is the real thing. Supposing the Government were to cease to arrest civil resisters, our jail-going would then stop, but that would not mean that our fight is over. A civil resister does not go to jail to embarrass the jail authorities by indulging in the breach of jail rules. Of course, there can be civil disobedience in jail too. But there are definite rules for it. The point is that the civil resister's fight does not end with his imprisonment. Once we are inside the prison we become civilly dead so far as the outside world is concerned. But inside the prison our fight to convert the hearts of the Government's bond slaves, that is, the jail officials, just begins. It gives us a chance of demonstrating to them that we are not like thieves or *dacoits* [robbers, pirates], that we wish them no ill nor do we want to destroy the opponent but want only to make him our friend, not by servilely obeying all orders, just or unjust – that is not the way to win true friendship – but by showing them that there is no evil in us, that we sincerely wish them well and in our hearts pray that God's goodness may be upon them.

My fight continued even when I was lodged behind prison bars. I have been several times in prison and every time I have left only friends behind in the jail officials and others with whom I have come in contact.

Talk to Khudai Khidmatgars,[28]
Pyarelal, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among North West Frontier Pathans*,
op. cit., pp. 87–91

28. In 1929, Abdul Ghaffar Khan formed the Khudai Khidmatgars ('Servants of God'), or the so-called Red Shirt Movement, a nonviolent, nationalist movement against the British and in support of Indian independence, one that sought to awaken the political consciousness of the Muslim Pushtuns, or Pathans. He was opposed to partition. (Also see footnote 23.)

True bravery

To fight with the sword does call for bravery of a sort. But to die is braver far than to kill. He alone is truly brave, he alone is martyr in the true sense who dies without fear in his heart and without wishing hurt to his enemy, not the one who kills and dies. If our country, even in its present fallen state, can exhibit this type of bravery, what a beacon light will it be for Europe with all its discipline, science and organisation. If Europe but realized that, heroic as it undoubtedly is for a handful of people to offer armed resistance in the face of superior numbers, it is far more heroic to stand up against overwhelming numbers without any arms at all, it would save itself and blaze a trail for the world.

Address to the officers of Red Shirts,
Pyarelal, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among North West Frontier Pathans*,
op. cit., pp. 56–7

There is no bravery greater than a resolute refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power, no matter how great, and without bitterness of spirit and in the fullness of faith that the spirit alone lives, nothing else does.

Harijan, 15 October 1938

Without such suffering it is not possible to attain freedom

If a father does injustice, it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his institution on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt, the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it; even so if a government does a grave injustice the subject must withdraw co-operation wholly or partially, sufficiently to wean the ruler from wickedness. In each case conceived by me there is an element of suffering whether mental or physical. Without such suffering it is not possible to attain freedom.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,*
op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 357

A duty that cannot be shirked

In civil disobedience, the resister suffers the consequences of disobedience. This was what Daniel did when he disobeyed the law of the Medes and Persians. That is what John Bunyan did, and that is what the *raiyats* (peasants) have done in India from time immemorial. It is the law of our being. Violence is the law of the beast in us. Self-suffering, that is, civil resistance, is the law of the man in us. It is rarely that the occasion for civil resistance arises in a well-ordered State. But when it does, it becomes a duty that

cannot be shirked by one who counts his honour, that is, conscience, above everything.

Young India, 23 August 1919

Doctrine of noncooperation

Until we have wrung justice and until we have wrung our self-respect from unwilling hands and from unwilling pens, there can be no co-operation. Our *Shastras* (Scriptures) say and I say so with the greatest deference to all the greatest religious preceptors of India, but without fear of contradiction that our *Shastras* teach us that there shall be no co-operation between injustice and justice, between an unjust man and a justice-loving man, between truth and untruth. Co-operation is a duty only so long as Government protects your honour, and non-co-operation is an equal duty when the government, instead of protecting, robs you of your honour. That is the doctrine of non-co-operation.

The Hindu, 13 August 1920

Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant of spirit glory in fighting alone. And you are all here to cultivate that valour of the spirit. Be you one or many, this valour is the only valour, all else is false. And the valour of the spirit cannot be achieved without Sacrifice, Determination, Faith and Humility.

Young India, 17 June 1926

The duty to withdraw support

Most people do not understand the complicated machinery of the government. They do not realize that every citizen silently but none the less certainly sustains the government of the day in ways of which he has no knowledge. Every citizen therefore renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And it is quite proper to support it so long as the actions of the government are bearable. But when they hurt him and his nation, it becomes his duty to withdraw his support.

It is true that in the vast majority of cases, it is the duty of a subject to submit to wrongs on failure of the usual procedure, so long as they do not affect his vital being. But every nation and every individual have the right, and it is their duty, to rise against an intolerable wrong.

Young India, 28 July 1920

Public opinion and civil disobedience

Once a law is enacted, many difficulties must be encountered before it can be reversed. It is only when public opinion is highly educated that the laws in force in a country can be repealed.

Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa,* op. cit., p. 140

Choosing methods different in kind from those of our opponents

We have chosen a method that compels us to turn, each one of us, our face towards God. Non-co-operation presumes that our opponent with whom we non-co-operate resorts to methods which are as questionable as the purpose he seeks to fulfil by such methods. We shall therefore find favour in the sight of God only by choosing methods which are different in kind from those of our opponents. This is a big claim we have made for ourselves, and we can attain success within the short time appointed by us, only if our methods are in reality radically different from those of the Government.

Hence the foundation of our movement rests on complete non-violence, whereas violence is the final refuge of the Government. And as no energy can be created without resistance, our non-resistance to Government violence must bring the latter to a standstill. But our non-violence to be true, must be in word, thought and deed. It makes no difference that with you non-violence is an expedient. While it lasts, you cannot consistently with your pledge harbour designs of violence. On the contrary we must have implicit faith in our programme of non-violence, which presupposes perfect accord between thought, word and deed.

Young India, 29 September 1921

More dangerous than armed rebellion

Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion, a refusal to obey every single State-made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For, it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficiency of innocent suffering.

Young India, 4 August 1921

Nonviolence is more than nonkilling

Hatred is in the air, and impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence, to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and everywhere. But it is more wrong and unbecoming in a country where fighters for freedom have declared to the world that their policy is truth and non-violence. Hatred, they argue, cannot be turned into love. Those who believe in violence will naturally use it by saying, 'Kill your enemy, injure him and his property wherever you can, whether openly or secretly as necessity requires.' The result will be deeper hatred and counter-hatred, and vengeance let loose on both sides. The recent war, whose embers have yet hardly died, loudly proclaims the bankruptcy of this use of hatred. And it remains to be seen whether the so-called victors have really won or whether they have not depressed themselves in seeking and trying to depress their enemies. It is a bad game at its best. Some philosophers of action in the country improve upon the model and say, 'We shall never kill our enemy but we shall destroy

his property.' Perhaps I do them an injustice when I call it his 'property', for the remarkable thing is that the so-called enemy has brought no property of his own and what little he has brought he makes us pay for. Therefore what we destroy is really our own. The bulk of it, whether in men or things, he produces here. So what he really has is the custody of it. For the destruction too we have to pay through the nose and it is the innocents who are made to pay. That is the implication of punitive tax and all it carries with it.

Non-violence in the sense of mere non-killing does not appeal to me, therefore, to be any improvement on the technique of violence. It means slow torture and when slowness becomes ineffective we shall immediately revert to killing and to the atom bomb, which is the last word in violence today. Therefore I suggested in 1920 the use of non-violence and its inevitable twin companion truth for canalizing hatred into the proper channel. The hater hates not for the sake of hatred, but because he wants to drive away from his country the hated being or beings. He will, therefore, as readily achieve his end by non-violent as by violent means.

Harijan, 24 February 1948

An able general always gives battle in his own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy.

In a *satyagraha* campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, for example, whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organize non-violent strength through constructive work and purely selfless humanitarian service are determined according to the exigencies of the situation. A *satyagrahi* must carry out whatever plan is laid out for him with a cool determination giving way to neither excitement nor depression.

Harijan, 27 May 1939

Nonviolence can be wielded by all

Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all – children, young men and women or grown up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts.

It is a profound error to suppose that whilst the law is good enough for individuals it is not for masses of mankind.

Harijan, 5 September 1936

The risks of civil disobedience

There is danger in civil disobedience only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence. For when tyranny is rampant much rage is generated among the victims. It remains latent because of their weakness and bursts in all its fury

on the slightest pretext. Civil disobedience is a sovereign method of transmuting this undisciplined, life-destroying, latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success. The attendant risk is nothing compared to the result promised. When the world has become familiar with its use and when it has had a series of demonstrations of its successful working, there will be less risk in civil disobedience than there is in aviation, in spite of that science having reached a high stage of development.

Young India, 27 March 1930

On nonviolent battle

Nothing better can happen to a *satyagrahi* than meeting death all unsought in the very act of *satyagraha*, that is, pursuing Truth.

Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa,* op. cit., p. 288

We are not to seek imprisonment out of bravado. The gaol [jail] is the gateway to liberty and honour, when innocence finds itself in it.

Young India, 1 June 1921

Civil disobedience asks for and needs not a single farthing for its support. It needs and asks for stout hearts with a faith that will not flinch from any danger, and will shine the brightest in the face of severest trial.

Young India, 1 April 1926

Code for civil resisters as prisoners

In my opinion, therefore, as *satyagrahis* we are bound, when we become prisoners:

1. to act with the most scrupulous honesty;
2. to co-operate with the prison officials in their administration;
3. to set, by our obedience to all reasonable discipline, an example to co-prisoners;
4. to ask for no favours and claim no privileges which the meanest of prisoners do not get and which we do not need strictly for reasons of health;
5. not to fail to ask what we do so need and not to get irritated if we do not obtain it;
6. to do all the tasks allotted, to the utmost of our ability.

'My Jail Experiences – 7', *Young India*, 5 June 1924

White art of nonviolence

I have no manner of doubt that, if it is possible to train millions in the black art of violence, which is the law of the beast, it is more possible to train them in the white art of non-violence which is the law of the regenerate man.

Harijan, 30 September 1939

Non-violence is a universal principle and its operation is not limited by a hostile environment. Indeed, its efficacy can be tested only when it acts in the midst of and in spite of opposition. Our non-violence would be a hollow thing and nothing worth, if it depended for its success on the goodwill of the [British] authorities.

Harijan, 12 November 1938

For leaders of nonviolent struggle

A reformer has to sail not with the current, very often he has to go against it, even though it may cost him his life. You must not be carried off your feet by unthinking, popular applause. The essential part of your message to the country is not how to wield the sword but how to cease to be afraid of it.

Address to Indian National Army (INA) Officers,
Bombay Chronicle, 23 May 1946

Nonviolent boycott

Non-violent boycott may include a refusal to dine at the house of the person boycotted, refusal to attend marriages and such other functions at his place, doing no business with him and taking no help from him.

On the other hand, refusing to nurse the boycotted person if he is sick, not allowing doctors to visit him, refusing to help in performing the last rites if he happens to die, refusing to allow him to make use of wells, temples, etc., all this is violent boycott. Deeper reflection will reveal that non-violent boycott can be continued for a long period and no external force can prove effectual in terminating it, whereas violent boycott cannot continue for long and external force can be used in a large measure to put an end to it. Ultimately violent boycott only does disservice to a movement.

'The Weapon of Boycott' (originally in Gujarati, later
translated into English), *Navajivan*, 18 March 1928

Prisons are factories where liberty is made

Liberty is a dearly bought commodity, and prisons are factories where it is manufactured.

Young India, 25 September 1924

After all, no one wants non-co-operation for the sake of it. No one prefers imprisonment to freedom. But when freedom is in jeopardy, non-co-operation may be a duty and prison may be a palace.

Young India, 4 December 1924

All compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on fundamentals is surrender. For, it is all give and no take.

Harijan, 30 March 1930

The right to civil disobedience

The right to civil disobedience accrues only to those who know and practise the duty of voluntary obedience to laws, whether made by them or others. Obedience should come not from fear of the consequences of the breach, but because it is the duty to obey with all our heart and not merely mechanically. Without the fulfilment of this preliminary condition, civil disobedience is civil only in name, and never of the strong but of the weak. It is not charged with goodwill, that is, non-violence.

Pyarelal, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among North West Frontier Pathans*, op. cit., p. 126

A law-abiding spirit

Civil disobedience . . . presupposes a scrupulous and willing observance of all laws which do not hurt the moral sense. Civil disobedience is not a state of lawlessness and licence, but pre-supposes a law-abiding spirit combined with self-restraint.

Young India, 17 November 1921

Whilst on the one hand civil disobedience authorises disobedience of unjust laws or unmoral laws of a state which one seeks to overthrow, it requires meek and willing submission to the penalty of disobedience and its attendant hardships.

Young India, 29 December 1921

Disobedience to be civil has to be nonviolent

Those only can take up civil disobedience who believe in willing obedience even to irksome laws imposed by the State so long as they do not hurt their conscience or religion, and are prepared equally willingly to suffer the penalty of civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be absolutely non-violent, the underlying principle being the winning over of the opponent by suffering, that is, love.

Young India, 3 November 1921

All religions teach that two opposite forces act upon us and that the human endeavour consists in a series of eternal rejections and acceptances. Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good.

Young India, 1 June 1921

Conversion not coercion

But my creed is non-violence under all circumstances. My method is conversion, not coercion; it is self-suffering, not the suffering of the tyrant. I know that method to be infallible. I know that a whole people can adopt

it without accepting it as its creed and without understanding its philosophy. People generally do not understand the philosophy of all their acts.

Young India, 12 January 1928

India and the British Commonwealth

This is the least it should mean. South Africa has achieved that status today. It is a partnership at will of free peoples. Between Britain and the Dominions there is a partnership at will on terms of equality and for mutual benefit. What India will finally have is for her and her alone to determine. This power of determination remains unfettered by the existing creed. What therefore the creed does retain is the possibility of evolution of *swaraj* within the British Empire or call it the British Commonwealth. The cryptic meaning of *swaraj* I have often described to be within the Empire if possible, without if necessary. I venture to think that it is not possible to improve upon that conception. It is totally consistent with national self-respect and it provides for the highest growth of the nation.

After all, the real definition will be determined by our action, the means we adopt to achieve the goal. If we but concentrate upon the means, *swaraj* will take care of itself. Our exploration should, therefore, take place in the direction of determining not the definition of an indefinable term like *swaraj* but in discovering the ways and means.

Young India, 13 January 1927

My belief in the capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature.

Harijan, 7 June 1942

King on the tools of nonviolent struggle

As African-Americans put on their walking shoes and marched, organized boycotts, held high their placards, sat-in, rode across state lines, faced police dogs, were injured by the jets of waterhoses, sustained beatings and were jailed without bail, King explained the meaning of their decisions to the nation. Gandhi's belief that the action should reveal its ultimate purpose was usually well exemplified in the civil rights movement. As political organizing became more dominant, voter-registration drives, mock ballots, parallel political parties and formal challenges became the tools of choice. These included contesting the seating of an all-white delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, and legal moves against licensing a racially biased television station. As political tools predominated, for the most part, each instrument contained within it an explanation of the grievance.

Sitting-in

The nonviolent strategy has been to dramatize the evils of our society in such a way that pressure is brought to bear against those evils by the forces

of goodwill in the community and change is produced. The student sit-ins of 1960 are a classic illustration of this method. Students were denied the right to eat at a lunch counter, so they deliberately sat down to protest their denial. They were arrested, but this made their parents mad and so they began to close their charge accounts. The students continued to sit in, and this further embarrassed the city, scared away many white shoppers and soon produced an economic threat to the business life of the city. Amid this type of pressure, it is not hard to get people to agree to change.

King, 'Non-violence: The Only Road to Freedom',
Ebony, October 1966, pp. 27–30

Marching feet: The power of the nonviolent procession

So far, we have had the Constitution backing most of the demands for change, and this had made our work easier, since we could be sure that the federal courts would usually back up our demonstrations legally. Now we are approaching areas where the voice of the Constitution is not clear. We have left the realm of constitutional rights and we are entering the area of human rights. When Negroes marched, so did the nation. The power of the nonviolent march is indeed a mystery. It is always surprising that a few hundred Negroes marching can produce such a reaction across the nation. When marches are carefully organized around well-defined issues, they represent the power which Victor Hugo phrased as the most powerful force in the world, 'an idea whose time has come.' Marching feet announce that the time has come for a given idea. When the idea is a sound one, the cause a just one, and the demonstration a righteous one, change will be forthcoming. But if any of these conditions are not present, the power for change is missing also. A thousand people demonstrating for the right to use heroin would have little effect. By the same token, a group of ten thousand marching in anger against a police station and cussing out the chief of police will do very little to bring respect, dignity, and unbiased law enforcement. Such a demonstration would only produce fear and bring about an addition of forces to the station and more oppressive methods by the police.

Marches must continue in the future and they must be the kind of marches that bring about the desired result. But the march is not a 'one-shot' victory-producing method. One march is seldom successful, and as my good friend Kenneth Clark points out in *Dark Ghetto,* it can serve merely to let off steam and siphon off the energy which is necessary to produce change. However, when marching is seen as a part of a program to dramatize an evil, to mobilize the forces of good will, and to generate pressure and power for change, marches will continue to be effective.

Our experience is that marches must continue over a period of thirty to forty-five days to produce any meaningful results. They must also be of sufficient size to produce some inconvenience to the forces in power or they go unnoticed. In other words, they must demand the attention of the

press, for it is the press that interprets the issue to the community at large and thereby sets in motion the machinery for change.

Along with the march as a weapon for change in our nonviolent arsenal must be listed the boycott. Basic to the philosophy of nonviolence is the refusal to cooperate with evil. There is nothing quite so effective as a refusal to cooperate economically with the forces and institutions which perpetuate evil in our communities.

King, 'Non-violence: The Only Road to Freedom',
Ebony, October 1996, pp. 31–2

Jail helps you to rise above the miasma of everyday life. You can meditate a little. You can read a little. . . . Don't worry about jail, for when you go to jail for a cause like this, the jails cease to be jails, they become havens for freedom and human dignity.

King, speech, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church,
Birmingham, Alabama, 3 May 1963, in Charles V. Hamilton (ed.),
The Black Experience in American Politics
(New York: Capricorn Books, 1973), p. 164

The march to Washington

We're seeking to arouse the conscience of the nation on the plight, the economic plight of the Negro 100 years after emancipation. And secondly we are there, we will be there to demand strong forthright civil rights legislation in this session of Congress. Now of course this will be a one day protest; it will be nonviolent; we're gonna disappoint those who would like to see violence emerge; we're gonna disappoint those senators who would like to see a riotous situation develop; this will be a nonviolent, peaceful protest. In fact we're gonna train 1000 persons for the job of keeping the whole movement orderly, they will be trained in the discipline and the techniques of nonviolence, and we're going all-out to see that this will be a peaceful protest and that it will not be violent at any point.

King, address at March on Detroit, Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan,
23 January 1963, in Martin Luther King Jr
Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

Excerpt from an interview in 'The Negro Protest'[29]

Clark: [H]ow do you maintain this type of discipline, control and dignity in your followers . . . ?

King: Well, we do a great deal in terms of teaching both the theoretical aspects of nonviolence as well as the practical application. We even have courses

29. This interview with Kenneth B. Clark was published in a book of interviews with Malcolm X and James Baldwin entitled *The Negro Protest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

where we go through the experience of being roughed up and this kind of socio-drama has proved very helpful in preparing those who are engaged in demonstrations. The other thing is –

Clark: Does this include even the children?

King: Yes, it includes the children. In Birmingham where we had several young – we had some children as young as seven years old to participate in the demonstrations, and they were in the workshops. In fact, none of them went out for a march, none of them engaged in any of the demonstrations before going through this kind of teaching session. So that through this method we are able to get the meaning of nonviolence over, and I think there is a contagious quality in a movement like this when everybody talks about nonviolence and being faithful to it and being dignified in your resistance. It tends to get over to the larger group because this becomes a part of the vocabulary of the movement.

Statement on seeking your freedom

You've got to be willing to face police forces, you've got to be willing to face vicious dogs. I still ask you the question, do you want to be free tonight? Do you want to be free tonight?

You've got to put on your walking shoes; you've got to fill up the jails of Danville, Virginia if you want to be free tonight, you've got to have Mayor Simpson at the point where he will look out of the windows of this city and see a number that no man can match.

King, speech given at a rally, Danville, Virginia,
11 July 1963, audio transmission

Walking for freedom

Walking for freedom has been an integral part of man's struggle for freedom and dignity.

Gandhi of India began the great, nonviolent deliverance of India by a massive people's march to the sea. The people of China, defenseless against Japanese aggression, walked thousands of miles across their nation, and Japan never really conquered or broke the spirit of China. We all know how Moses, inflamed by the oppression of his people, led the march out of Egypt into the promised land.

Walking for freedom has been an inseparable part of the Negro struggle for full emancipation.

Over a century ago courageous slaves broke out of plantations and, despite terrifying dangers, began a long march North, to freedom. This was the underground railroad. This walking to end injustice went on for years and did three mighty things: It shook the slave system to its very roots. It aroused the conscience of this nation. It gave the lie to the myth of the so-called 'kindly masters' and 'contented slaves.'

Many years later, when abuse and insults grew intolerable in Montgomery, Alabama, the tradition of walking in protest for human rights was revived. Bus segregation in Montgomery was crushed under 50,000 marching feet.

Today, in this great historic demonstration, you, the young people of America, have marched for freedom. Fifty thousand in the fight for a free America. . . .

Keep marching and show the pessimists and the weak of spirit that they are wrong. Keep marching and don't let them silence you. Keep marching and resist injustice with the firm, non-violent spirit you demonstrated today.

The future belongs, not to those who slumber or sleep, but to those who cannot rest while the evil of injustice thrives in the bosom of America. The future belongs to those who march toward freedom.

King, address at youth march for integrated schools
(delivered by Coretta Scott King because of the
illness of her husband), Washington, D.C.,
25 October 1958, Library of Congress

Gandhi on democracy, human rights and justice

During most of Gandhi's life, the Communist Party and Marxist thinkers in India were critical of him. Their attack was based on an argument that the Indian struggle was bourgeois; they alleged that Gandhi was not serious about ending colonialism. The socialists were also negative but subsequently learned to understand and follow him.

What Gandhi grasped, and such critics overlooked, is that all action begins with individual determination. He believed that a person cannot embark on sweeping social change if he or she neglects personal change. Moreover, he believed that each person can live by the highest ideals because this is the starting point for all change and the beginning for every social transformation.

Indian independence could be achieved through a nonviolent political movement, at the same time that each individual was liberated from fear and gained self-respect. Independence was, therefore, inseparable from the individual, and vice versa. Neither could democracy be separated from entrusting the good of the society to the citizen. Gandhi had little interest in the minutiae of political parties, parliaments or institutions. He was concerned with popular participation and the recognition of interdependence.

Democracy, disciplined and enlightened, is the finest thing in the world. A democracy prejudiced, ignorant, superstitious, will lend itself to chaos and may be self-destroyed.

Young India, 30 July 1931

Democracy is not a state in which people act like sheep. Under democracy individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded.

Harijan, 7 May 1942

I hope also to achieve the end by demonstrating that real *swaraj* (independence or self-government) will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *swaraj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

'Interrogatories Answered',
Young India, 29 January 1925

'Self-government', said Gandhiji, 'means continuous effort to be independent of government control whether it is foreign government or whether it is national.' '*Swaraj* Government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life.'

Young India, 8 August 1925

I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power. That is why a thinker like Thoreau said that 'that government is the best which governs the least'. This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much State interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic in name.

Harijan, 11 January 1936

In matters of conscience, the Law of Majority has no place.

Young India, 4 August 1920

My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence. No country in the world today shows any but patronizing regard for the weak.

Harijan, 18 May 1940

H. G. Wells was a famed British journalist, sociologist, novelist and historian. A Fabian who campaigned for world peace and was an early believer in the League of Nations, he sought Gandhi's opinion on the 'Rights of Man', a series of five articles under this title that was being publicly discussed in both

the British and Indian newspapers. In India, it appeared in the national daily the *Hindustan Times*.

RECEIVED YOUR CABLE. HAVE CAREFULLY READ YOUR FIVE ARTICLES. YOU WILL PERMIT ME TO SAY YOU ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK. I FEEL SURE THAT I CAN DRAW UP A BETTER CHARTER OF RIGHTS THAN YOU HAVE DRAWN UP. BUT OF WHAT GOOD WILL IT BE? WHO WILL BECOME ITS GUARDIAN? IF YOU MEAN PROPAGANDA OR POPULAR EDUCATION YOU HAVE BEGUN AT THE WRONG END. I SUGGEST THE RIGHT WAY. BEGIN WITH A CHARTER OF DUTIES OF MAN (BOTH D AND M CAPITAL) AND I PROMISE THE RIGHTS WILL FOLLOW AS SPRING FOLLOWS WINTER. I WRITE FROM EXPERIENCE. AS A YOUNG MAN I BEGAN LIFE BY SEEKING TO ASSERT MY RIGHTS AND I SOON DISCOVERED I HAD NONE NOT EVEN OVER MY WIFE – SO I BEGAN BY DISCOVERING AND PERFORMING MY DUTY BY MY WIFE MY CHILDREN FRIENDS COMPANIONS AND SOCIETY AND FIND TODAY THAT I HAVE GREATER RIGHTS, PERHAPS THAN ANY LIVING MAN I KNOW. IF THIS IS TOO TALL A CLAIM THEN I SAY I DO NOT KNOW ANYONE WHO POSSESSES GREATER RIGHTS THAN I.

Cable to H. G. Wells
Hindustan Times, 16 April 1940

The only force at the disposal of democracy is that of public opinion. *Satyagraha,* civil disobedience and fasts have nothing in common with the use of force, veiled or open. But even these have restricted use in democracy.

Harijan, 7 September 1947

In a democracy the individual will is governed and limited by the social will which is the State, which is governed by and for democracy. If every individual takes the law into his hands, there is no State, it becomes anarchy, the absence of social law or State. That way lies destruction of liberty.

Gandhi, *Delhi Diary: Prayer Speeches from September 10, 1947 to January 30, 1948*
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), p. 18

The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility cannot be denied; unbridled licence is a sign of vulgarity, injurious alike to self and our neighbours.

Young India, 3 June 1926

Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.

Harijan, 27 May 1939

A born democrat is a born disciplinarian. Democracy comes naturally to him who is habituated normally to yield willing obedience to all laws, human or divine.

Harijan, 27 May 1939

The democracy of my conception is wholly inconsistent with the use of physical force for enforcing its will.

Pyarelal, *The Epic Fast*
(Ahmedabad: Mohanlal Maganlal Bhati, 1932), p. 102

Criticism and public life

We must always listen to criticism of our faults and failings, never to our praises.

Bapu-ke-Ashirvad, 5 July 1945

Criticism of public man is a welcome sign of public awakening. It keeps workers on the alert.

Young India, 9 May 1921

Healthy, well-informed, balanced criticism is the ozone of public life.

Harijan, 13 November 1925

Nature has so made us that we do not see our backs; it is reserved for others to see them. Hence, it is wise to profit by what they see.

Harijan, 14 December 1947

Human rights

It is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded fully developed member of society.

Harijan, 28 January 1939

I will give you a talisman: Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj* [independence] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then, you will find your doubts and your self melting away.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,*
op. cit., Vol. 8, p. 89

Rights of minorities

Let us not push the mandate theory to ridiculous extremes and become slave to resolutions of majorities. That would be a revival of brute force in a more virulent form. If rights of minorities are to be respected, the majority must be tolerant and respect their opinion and action . . . it will be the duty of the majority to see to it that the minorities receive a proper hearing and are not otherwise exposed to insults.

Young India, 8 December 1921

Pluralism and democracy

The Gujarat Vidyapith hopes to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past and enriched by the experience of later times.[30] It stands for synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India. This synthesis will naturally be of the Swadeshi [Indian] type where each culture is assessed its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity.

Young India, 7 November 1920

Political versus social and economic emancipation

Ever since I came to India I have felt that social revolution is a much more difficult thing to achieve than the political revolution, by which I mean ending our present slavery, under the British rule. There are some critics who say that India cannot attain her political and economic emancipation till we get social emancipation. I regard it as a snag and a conundrum set to puzzle us, because I have found that the absence of political emancipation retards even our efforts for bringing about social and economic emancipation. At the same time it is also true that without a social revolution we will not be able to leave India happier than when we were born. I can, however, indicate no royal road for bringing about a social revolution except that we should represent it in every detail of our own lives.

Force has been used to alter the structure of society in some countries. But I have purposely eliminated it from our consideration. So my advice to you is: Try again and again and never say that you are defeated. Do not get impatient and say, 'the people are no good'. Rather say, 'I am no good.' If the people do not respond within the time limit prescribed by you the failure is yours, not theirs. It is thankless and laborious work. But you do not expect thanks for your work. Work that is undertaken for love is no burden – it is pure joy.

Discussion with workers and staff members, 20 December 1945,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 82, p. 244

30. The Gujarat Vidyapith is a nationalist university established by Gandhi in 1920, based on principles of social reconstruction, self-reliance and nonviolence.

Trusteeship

The man who takes for himself only enough to satisfy the needs customary in his society and spends the rest for social service becomes a trustee.

6 May 1939, *CWMG*,
op. cit., Vol. 69, p. 219

The past twelve months have abundantly shown the possibilities of non-violence adopted even as a policy. When the people adopt it as a principle of conduct, class war becomes an impossibility. The experiment in that direction is being tried in Ahmedabad. It has yielded most satisfactory results and there is every likelihood of its proving conclusive. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer with the capitalist, instead of remaining his slave. If he aims at becoming the sole owner, he will most likely be killing the hen that lays golden eggs.

'Questions and Answers',
Young India, 26 March 1931

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earning and there is *ahimsa* in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this

only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that *ahimsa* is preeminently a weapon for individuals and its use should therefore be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. *Ahimsa* is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains, because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore God signified an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found him. But *avatars* [human incarnation of a deity] and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya* [religious penance, austerity, or sacrifice], given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of *ahimsa* entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

'Equal Distribution',
Harijanbandhu, 24 August 1940

Complete renunciation of one's possessions is a thing which very few even among ordinary folk are capable of. All that can legitimately be expected of the wealthy class is that they should hold their riches and talents in trust and use them for the service of the society. To insist on more would be to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*,
op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 66

No matter how much money we have earned, we should regard ourselves as trustees holding these moneys for the welfare of all our neighbours.

Young India, 6 October 1927

Economic disparities

I, for one, daily realize this truth from experience, that Nature provides for the need of every living creature from moment to moment, and I also see that, voluntarily or involuntarily, knowingly or unknowingly, we violate this great law every moment of our lives. All of us can see that in consequence of our doing so, on the one hand large numbers suffer through over indulgence and, on the other, countless people suffer through want. Our endeavour, therefore, is to save mankind from the calamity of widespread starvation, on the one hand, and, on the other, destruction of food-grains by the American millionaires through a false understanding of economic laws.

Letter to Chhaganlal Joshi Mahadevbhini,
Diary of Mahadev Desai, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 224

Social justice

Question: What is the place of *satyagraha* in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

Answer: The same as against the foreign power *Satyagraha* is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a land-owner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him, he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants, or those who have espoused their cause and have influence, will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit, if asked to do so, but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself, and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the

replaced tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus *satyagraha* is a process of educating public opinion such [*sic*] that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the processes and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

Answers to questions at constructive workers' conference, Madras, *The Hindu*, 26 January 1946; *Harijan*, 31 March 1946; Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 575–6

For the poor the economic is the spiritual. You cannot make any other appeal to those starving millions. It will fall flat on them. But you take food to them and they will regard you as their God. They are incapable of any other thought.

Young India, 5 May 1927

It is good enough to talk of God whilst we are sitting here after a nice breakfast and looking forward to a nicer luncheon, but how am I to talk of God to the millions who have to go without two meals a day? To them, God can only appear as bread and butter.

Young India, 15 October 1931

The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot.

Young India, 24 June 1926

We should be ashamed of resting or having a square meal so long as there is one able-bodied man or woman without work or food.

Young India, 6 October 1921

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages.

Young India, 13 October 1921

Socialism

I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakeable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately, Western socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialistic doctrines.

Harijan, 20 April 1940; Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 571

> True social economics will teach us that the working man, the clerk and employer are part of the same indivisible organism. None is smaller or greater than the other. Their interests should be not conflicting, but identical and independent.
>
> *Young India*, 3 May 1928

> I have been a sympathetic student of the Western social order and I have discovered that, underlying the fever that fills the soul of the West, there is a restless search for truth. I value that spirit. Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific enquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of.
>
> *Amrita Bazar Patrika,* 3 August 1934

Socialism and nonviolence

22 January 1937

Question: What do you think of communism? Do you think it would be good for India?

Answer: Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. I believe in non-violent communism.

Question: But communism in Russia is against private property. Do you want private property?

Answer: If communism came without any violence, it would be welcome. For then no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people. The millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people. The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause.

Question: Is there any difference of opinion between you and Jawaharlal Nehru in respect of socialism?

Answer: There is, but it is a difference in emphasis. He perhaps puts an emphasis on the result, whereas I put it on the means. Perhaps according to him I am putting over-emphasis on non-violence, whereas he, though he believes in non-violence, would want to have socialism by other means if it was impossible to have it by non-violence. Of course my emphasis on non-violence becomes one of principle. Even if it was assured that we could have independence by means of violence, I shall refuse to have it. It won't be real independence.

Interview with an Egyptian, *Harijan*, 13 February 1937

Industrial civilization

> I have heard many of our country-men say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it is made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. . . .

It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness.

Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings,*
op. cit., pp. 353, 354

During the visit to England in 1931, at the end of a series of searching questions by an American Press Correspondent, Gandhiji was asked: 'So you are opposed to machinery only when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few?' 'You are right', answered Gandhiji, 'I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. This is all.'

D. P. Nayar, *Towards a National System of Education*
(New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1989), p. 110

Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed.

Harijan, 28 July 1940

I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples extant of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances.

Young India, 7 October 1926

My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I therefore work for equitable distribution.

Young India, 17 March 1927

I should be born an untouchable

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an 'untouchable', so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.

Young India, 4 May 1921

The treasures of the world

And those who have followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible – to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the fullest possible for a human being – those who have reached the ideal of that state, testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,* op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 155

A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above that level, it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they may not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated.

Harijan, 29 August 1936

Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service.

Gandhi, *Yeravda Mandir,* op. cit., p. 24

A time is coming when those, who are in the mad rush today of multiplying their wants, vainly thinking that they add to the real substance, real knowledge of the world, will retrace their steps and say: 'What have we done?'

Young India, 8 December 1927

I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels, prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin-cloths and towels, and my reputation which cannot be worth much.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 142

Nonviolent reform

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and the have-nots. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, that is, self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

Harijan, 20 April 1940

All exploitation is based on co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. But self comes in and we hug the chains that bind us. This must cease. What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3 August 1934

Jesus was the greatest economist of his time

The question we are asking ourselves this evening is not a new one. It was addressed to Jesus two thousand years ago. St Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood; he is earnest. He talks of eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economising time and space – he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said unto him: 'Why callest thou me, Good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.' And he answered and said unto him; 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth.' Then Jesus beholding him, loved him and said unto him: 'One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven – come take up the cross and follow me.'

Speech at Muir College Economic Society, Allahabad,
The Leader, 25 December 1916

King on democracy, human rights and justice

Nonviolent action is premised on the belief that people can help themselves through its use and that they are capable of employing it effectively no matter what their circumstances. Through disciplined nonviolent action, the disfranchised, minorities, unofficial constituencies and nongovernmental groups are able to affirm themselves against entrenched forms of authority or military superiority. Popular participation in decision making is strengthened because the decision to endure injury or suffering must be made by the individual. No one can order another's suffering for a goal in the struggle. One must be willing oneself to incur suffering, take the risks and pay the penalties. King used his opportunities, in the pulpit and with his pen, to deepen the understanding of the rights and responsibilities of democracy and citizenship – outcomes of nonviolent resistance.

The great glory of democracy is the right to protest for rights.

King, speech at mass meeting, Holt Street Baptist Church,
Montgomery, 5 December 1955

The reason I can't advocate violence is because violence ultimately defeats itself. It ultimately destroys everybody. The reason I can't follow the old eye-for-an-eye philosophy is that it ends up leaving everybody blind.

Speech delivered at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church,
Birmingham, Alabama, 3 May 1963,
in Hamilton (ed.), *The Black Experience in American Politics*,
op. cit., p. 160

Well, I think we can safely say there is something different in this whole struggle. I think we can safely say that this is a great social revolution that is taking place in our nation, but it is different from other revolutions.

Now, of course we've had many revolutions in history and most of these revolutions have ended up by destroying property. In the final analysis they were seeking to overthrow an existing government.

In this situation there is no attempt to overthrow the government. The uniqueness of this revolution is that it is a quest on the part of millions of Negroes and their allies in the white community to make the nation live up to its basic principles that stand in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

In other words this is a revolution to get in, and not to destroy the existing government or to destroy property. And I think this makes a difference. And I think we saw today something of the nature of this revolution. On the one hand it is a revolution which says: all, here, and now. But on the other hand, it is a nonviolent peaceful revolution.

I think the other thing is that so many revolutions are based solely

on despair, but this is a revolution of rising expectations . . . so that it is a quest to get into the mainstream of America [*sic*] society, and it is a quest to go on toward a realization of the basic principle of democracy.

King, interview, 'March on Washington. . . . Report by the Leaders', by Jay Richard Kennedy, 8 August 1963, Washington, D.C.; aired on 29 August 1963, Metropolitan Broadcasting Television

We do not seek to rise from advantage to disadvantage. That would subvert justice. We seek democracy.

'King to Develop Non-Violent Integration Movement in South', *Ohio University Post,* 1 January 1960

Indeed, these students are not struggling for themselves alone. They are seeking to save the soul of America. They are taking our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In sitting down at the lunch counters, they are in reality standing up for the best in the American dream.

King, 'The Time for Freedom Has Come', *New York Times Magazine*, 10 September 1961, pp. 25, 118, 119

Gandhi on the news media

Public information was vital to Gandhi's approach. In neither the Vykom temple *satyagraha* nor the Bardoli peasant *satyagraha* did Gandhi remain in the community during the campaign. Instead, he managed what we would today call a national public-relations operation.

Investigation was always the first step, followed by attempted persuasion, and these efforts always came before taking any action. Information was, therefore, not a luxury but a necessity. Nonviolent direct action is always aimed at changing the hearts and minds of the oppressor, something that cannot be done without precise explanation of the goal. If not stated clearly, and if the action does not reveal its purpose, the sacrifice may be wasted. Moreover, popular participation could be achieved only if the populace was well informed. As a consequence, the collection and dissemination of information was a valued and strategic necessity in all of Gandhi's campaigns.

What is really needed to make democracy function is not knowledge of facts, but right education. And the true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions.

Harijan, 29 September 1946

Freedom of the press

The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within.

Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 349

One object of newspapers is to understand popular feeling and to give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*,
edited by Mahadev Desai
(Ahmedabad: Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Publishing House,
1995), p. 13

King on the news media

The presence of reporters at a jail was sometimes life-saving because atrocities are minimized by throwing off the cover of secrecy. Exposing the racist behavior of officials made them examine their actions in the light of a larger morality. In addition, King was an exemplar of the importance of appealing to one's opponent. While he was invigorating the black community, he was also touching the country's white citizenry, uplifting and ennobling all of his listeners. The news corps was the medium for his appeal. It was, therefore, essential to the total strategy.

The Morehouse College archives contain the text of a 1958 speech by King on the African-American news media. His notes to himself are included here.

When one pauses to examine the internal forces that have developed the Negro's consciousness and dignity, when one thinks of the forces that have cemented the Negro community, one immediately thinks of the Negro Press. Perhaps, more than any other single force it has devoted itself to the achievements, ambitions, hopes and even the failures of the Negro people. It has interpreted the Negro to the American people and to the world. It has brought the American people and the world to Negroes in cities, towns, plantations and cotton fields.

It has become angry for people who dare not express anger themselves. It has cried for Negroes when the hurt was so great that tears could not be shed. It has asked the Negro to analyze himself, organize himself, and realize his ambitions. It has been a crusading press and that crusade has, from its beginning in 1827, been the cry 'Freedom.' Gunnar

Myrdal, the great sociologist, in his study *The American Dilemma* stated that the Negro press is perhaps the most powerful single factor in shaping the ideas and actions of Negro America. But perhaps the greatest contribution of the Negro press is this: it is one major voice of the conscience of our nation. The 205 journals of Negro opinion say every day to the American people 'the struggle for democracy is not yet done. America is not yet America.'

In the margin, handwritten, is 'No paragraph' next to the first word of the following paragraph.

And this is of vital importance for there are millions of Americans who know American Negroes only through their press.

To the degree that the Negro Press can continue to play this role, its greatest contribution is not to the Negro really, but rather to America which cannot be at peace with itself until all men are free.

Today the American Negro is determined to win freedom. Not only because it is his right but because he has a duty to the nation to relieve it of the embarrassment democracy faces in the great struggle for the minds and hearts of men all over the world. Since the Negro press has played so important a role in this unfinished business of democracy, I am sure that all men of good will, Negro and white, join me in urging the Negro Press to continue its uncompromising efforts to make our beloved nation a place in which all men can live in the security that they will be judged as individuals, governed under just law, and free to develop their personalities in keeping with their capabilities.

King, address for *Negro Press Week*, 10 February 1958,
in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, College Archives,
Morehouse College, Atlanta

Public relations is a very necessary part of any protest of civil disobedience. The main objective is to bring moral pressure to bear upon an unjust system or a particularly unjust law. The public at large must be made aware of the inequities involved in such a system. . . .The world seldom believes the horror stories of history until they are documented via the mass media.

King, 'Letter to Harold Courlander', 30 October 1961,
in Alex Ayres (ed.), *The Wisdom of Martin Luther King, Jr.: An A-to-Z Guide to the Ideas of the Great Civil Rights Leader*
(New York: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 188, 149

Gandhi on religious faith

Gandhi reportedly said that he considered himself a Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist and Confucian. He recognized few oppositions between religions but, rather, sought to draw out what was complementary.

My Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are, more or less, true. All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality.

Young India, 29 May 1924

Charity begins at home

You need not mind what others do or ought to do. Charity begins at home. Let yours begin with yourself. Abolish all caste and religious or race distinctions from your heart. Be true to everyone – Hindu, Muslim, Harijan, English, etc., as you are, I hope, to yourself, and you will find that so far as you are concerned your difficulty will be solved and your example will be copied by others. Be sure that you have banished all hate from your heart, and that you have no political or other objective in loving and serving your neighbour as if he was your own self.

Harijan, 16 March 1940

I can't explain why I delight in calling myself and remaining a Hindu, but my remaining does not prevent me from assimilating all that is good and noble in Christianity, Islam and other faiths of the world.

Letter to B. W. Tucker, Principal, Collins High School,
Calcutta, 1 September 1928,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 37, p. 224

My constant prayer therefore is for a Christian or a Mussalman [Muslim] to be a better Christian and a better Mahomedan. I am convinced, I know, that God will ask, asks us now, not what we label ourselves but what we are, that is, what we do. With Him *deed* is everything, *belief* without deed is nothing. With Him doing is believing. The reader will pardon me for this digression. But it was necessary for me to deliver my soul over the Christian literature with which the Christian friends flooded me in the jail, if only to show my appreciation of their interest in my spiritual welfare.

'My Jail Experiences – 11',
Young India, 4 September 1924,
in *CWMG,* op. cit., Vol. 25, p. 86

There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. For

instance, if one wants to study the *Bhagavata*, one should do so not through a translation of it made by a hostile critic but one prepared by a lover of the *Bhagavata.* Similarly to study the Bible one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. The study of other religions besides one's own will give one a grasp of the rockbottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of the universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths'.

Young India, 6 December 1928

The fundamental truth of fellowship

So we can only pray, if we are Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu or that if we are Mussalmans [Muslims], not that a Hindu or a Christian should become a Mussalman, nor should we even secretly pray that anyone should be converted, but our inmost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian. That is the fundamental truth of fellowship.

Young India, 19 January 1928

It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman [Muslim] from his own stand point and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and *vice versa*. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love.

Young India, 21 January 1926

Nearness to God

There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They

simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler you need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of Kings. Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore that there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings and, thanks to the marvelous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Law-giver are one. I may not deny the law or the law-giver, because I know so little about it or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates. That informing Power or Spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this Power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.

But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in even the smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

I know that He has no evil in Him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today, but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks?

Young India, 11 October 1928

I have no special revelation of God's will. My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to 'the still small voice'.

Young India, 25 May 1921

He alone is a man of God who sees God in every soul. Such a man would not be prepared to kill another. . . . The true man of God has the strength to use the sword, but will not use it knowing that every man is the image of God.

Speech, Islamia College, Peshawar,
Harijan, 14 May 1938

It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business.

Harijan, 11 May 1947

My life is largely governed by reason, and when it fails, it is governed by a superior force, that is, faith.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*,
op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 230

Faith cannot be given by anybody. It has to come from within.

Young India, 17 April 1930

We often confuse spiritual knowledge with spiritual attainment. Spirituality is not a matter of knowing scriptures and engaging in philosophical discussions. It is a matter of heart culture, of unmeasurable strength. Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral.

Young India, 13 October 1921

Learning takes us through many stages in life, but it fails us utterly in the hour of danger and temptation. Then, faith alone saves.

Young India, 22 January 1925

We must not believe in nonviolence as a policy but as an article of faith

Islam, it is said, believes in the brotherhood of man. But you will permit me to point out that it is not the brotherhood of Mussalmans [Muslims] only but it is universal brotherhood, and that brings me to the second essential of the training for non-violence. We must not believe in non-violence as a policy, but as an article of faith. The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishvara of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are as many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes, and little man has tried in his humble way to describe the mighty God by giving Him attributes, though He is above all attributes, indescribable, inconceivable, immeasurable. Living faith in this God means acceptance of the brotherhood of mankind. It also means equal respect for all religions. If Islam is dear to you, Hinduism is dear to me and Christianity is dear to the Christians. It would be the height of intolerance – and intolerance is a species of violence – to believe that your religion is superior to other religions and that you would be justified in wanting others to change over to your faith.

Speech, Islamia College, Peshawar,
Hindustan Times, 5 May 1938

Theology and true religion

Sevagram, 12 March 1940

Question: What started you on your career of leadership?

Answer: It came to me, unsought, unasked. I do not know, though, what sort of leader I am, and whether what I am doing is leadership or service. But whatever it is, it came to me unasked.

Question: But the friends who came were sure that they were leaders, and they asked for guidance as leaders of Christian thought.

Answer: All I can say is that there should be less of theology and more of truth in all that you say or do.

Question: Will you kindly explain it?

Answer: How can I explain the obvious? Amongst agents of the many untruths that are propounded in the world one of the foremost is theology. I do not say that there is no demand for it. There is a demand in the world for many a questionable thing.

Question: Are you sure that no great result has come through your own study of Jesus?

Answer: Why? There is no doubt that it has come, but not, let me tell you, through theology or through the ordinary interpretation of theologists. For many of them contend that the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to mundane things, and that it was only meant for the twelve disciples. Well, I do not

believe this. I think the Sermon on the Mount has no meaning if it is not of vital use in everyday life to everyone.

Discussion with Christian missionaries,
Harijan, 23 March 1940

My experience tells me that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that we can realize it not by saying 'Lord, Lord' but by doing His will and His work. If, therefore, we wait for the Kingdom to come as something coming from outside, we shall be sadly mistaken.

Young India, 31 March 1927

November 25, 1932

What a joy it would be when people realise that religion consists not in outward ceremonial but an ever-growing inward response to the highest impulses that man is capable of.

From a letter to Samuel E. Stokes,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 52, p. 61

All religions are divinely inspired, but they are imperfect, because they are products of the human mind and taught by human minds. The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be the right one? Everybody is right from his own standpoint but it is not impossible that everybody may be wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one's own faith but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as north pole is from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will impart to us a truer understanding of our own. Tolerance obviously does not disturb the distinction between right and wrong or good and evil. The reference here throughout is naturally to the principal faiths of the world. They are all based on common fundamentals.

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 44, p. 167

It is good to die for religion but for religious fanaticism one must neither live nor die.

Bapu-ke-Ashirvad, 13 September 1948

Toleration

Toleration is not a coinciding of views. There should be toleration of one another's views, though they may be as poles asunder.

Young India, 12 June 1924

The golden rule of conduct is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and that we shall always see Truth in fragment and from different angles of vision.

Young India, 23 September 1926

Behind the magnificent and kaleidoscopic variety, one discovers in Nature a unity of purpose, design and form which is equally unmistakable.

Young India, 5 November 1925

After 18 September 1940

Our non-violence has to begin at home with our children, elders, neighbours and friends. We have to overlook the so-called blemishes of our friends and neighbours and never forgive our own. Then only shall we be able to right ourselves and as we ascend higher, our non-violence has to be practised among our political associates. We have to see and approach the view-points of those who differ from us. We have to be patient with them and convince them of their errors and be convinced of our own. Then proceeding further we have to deal patiently and gently with political parties that have different policies and different principles. We have to look at their criticism from their own standpoint always remembering that the greater the distance between ourselves and others the greater the scope for the play of our non-violence; and it is only when we have passed our examination or test in the fields, that we can deal with those against whom we are fighting and who have grievously wronged us.

Fragment of a letter to Abdul Ghaffar Khan,
Harijan, 18 January 1942

Once one assumes an attitude of intolerance, there is no knowing where it will take one. Intolerance, someone has said, is violence to the intellect and hatred is violence to the heart; antidote to both is charity.

Harijan, 29 August 1936

Religion and state

If I were a dictator, religion and State would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it.

Harijan, 22 September 1946

The State would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern.

Harijan, 22 September 1946

Politics and religion

Yes, I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.

Harijan, 10 February 1940

Unity in diversity

The need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of the different religions. We want to reach not the dead level, but unity in diversity. Any attempt to root out traditions, effects of heredity, climate and other surroundings is not only bound to fail, but is a sacrilege.

Young India, 25 September 1924

I think that we have to find unity in diversity. . . . We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal.

Harijan, 2 February 1934

One fundamental religion

It is my conviction that all the great faiths of the world are true, are God-ordained and that they serve the purpose of God and of those who have been brought up in those surroundings and those faiths. I do not believe that the time will ever come when we shall be able to say there is only one religion in the world. In a sense, even today there is one fundamental religion in the world. But there is no such thing as a straight line in nature. Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches, you may say religions are many, but as tree, religion is only one.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,*
op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 300

Independent India

Kafilatali, 12 February 1947

Independent India, as conceived by me, will have all Indians belonging to different religions living in perfect friendship. There need be no millionaires and no paupers; all would belong to the State, for the State belonged to them. I will die in the act of realizing this dream. I would not wish to live to see India torn asunder by civil strife.

Speech at prayer meeting,
The Hindu, 15 February 1947

Fellowship

What have I to take to the aborigines and the Assamese hillmen except to go in my nakedness to them? Rather than ask them to join my prayer, I would join their prayer. We were strangers to this sort of classification – 'animists', 'aborigines', etc. – but we have learnt it from English rulers. I must have the desire to serve and it must put me right with people.

'Discussion on Fellowship', *Young India*, 19 January 1928;
Raghavan Iyer (ed.),
The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,
Vol. 1: *Civilization, Politics, and Religion*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 537

King on religious faith

King's appreciation of Gandhi was doubtless enhanced by the resonance with Christianity in so much of Gandhi's thought. Faith was integral and influenced all of King's thoughts and actions. It was intertwined with justice.

It is also impossible to understand the Montgomery movement without understanding a certain spiritual basis of the movement. It is impossible to understand it without seeing that nonviolence in the final analysis is based on a sort of faith in the future. Now I am quite aware of the fact that there are persons who believe firmly in nonviolence who are not theists, who do not believe in a personal God. But I think every person who believes in nonviolent resistance, believes somehow that the universe in some form is on the side of justice and that there is something unfolding in the universe whether one speaks of it as an unconscious process or whether one speaks of it as some unmoved mover or whether someone speaks of it as a personal God, there is something in the universe that unfolds toward justice.

King, 'On the Power of Peaceful Persuasion',
address delivered at the University of California, Berkeley, 4 June 1957,
Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta

Another thing that goes along with this method, a basic belief that goes along with it, and it is the belief that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has great faith in the future. And there is a belief that, at bottom, *justice* will triumph in the universe over all of the forces of injustice. People are frequently asking me and people in Montgomery: How is it that we continue to move on and continue to walk after seven or eight months? How is it that we continue to burn out our automobile tires and keep going amid all of the tension? Well my wife answered the question a few days ago in a matter quite satisfactory to me. One reporter was asking her how it was that she remained so calm in the midst of all of the pressure of the situation, how she was able to keep moving in the

midst of all of the tension and constant flux. And I never will forget her words, 'We believe we are right, and in believing that we are right, we believe that God is with us.' And that is the answer. . . .

We have the strange feeling down in Montgomery that in our struggle for justice we have cosmic companionship. And so we can walk and never get weary because we believe and know that there is a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice. And this belief, and this feeling that God is on the side of truth and justice and love and that they will eventually reign supreme in this universe. This comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something that stands at the center of our faith.

King, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony',
23 July 1956, in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. That will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man.

I know you are asking today, 'How long will it take?' I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again.

How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.

How long? Not long, because you will reap what you sow.

How long? Not long. Because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

How long? Not long, 'cause mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on.

King, 'Our God Is Marching On!',
address at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery march,
25 March 1965, in Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*,
op. cit., p. 230

Gandhi on human equality

Equality follows logically from nonviolence, according to Gandhi, because the latter is nonexploitive. Not exploiting others would be impossible without equality.[31] As Gandhi interprets his own guiding concept of *satyagraha*, or the power of Truth, even a frail woman can pit herself on equal terms against a giant armed with the most powerful weapons, as can a child.

31. Jayatanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969), p. 86.

Preaching at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, in his father's pulpit, in May 1967, King urged the United States to abandon its 'tragic, reckless adventure' in Viet Nam.
(Photo: Corbis-Bettmann, New York World Telegram & Sun Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

'We want all of our rights,' King told a mass rally in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 1965. (Photo: Corbis-Bettmann/ UPI Telephoto, New York World Telegram & Sun Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)

Whatever action is chosen must be consistent with the state of affairs sought after the conflict is over. If one is struggling for a free and democratic society, therefore, the time to involve everyone is at the beginning.

Equality of the sexes

Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another, each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived.

Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*,
op. cit., p. 423

Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things.

Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings*,
op. cit., p. 425

Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on nonviolence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his.

Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), p. 17

My ideal is this: A man should remain man and yet should become woman; similarly a woman should remain woman and yet become man. This means that man should cultivate the gentleness and the discrimination of woman; and woman should cast off her timidity and become brave and courageous.

Gandhi, 'Talks to Ashram Women',
in Kakasaheb Kalelkar (ed.), *To Ashram Sisters*
(Ahmedabad, 1952), pp. 94–5

Man has converted woman into a domestic drudge and an instrument of his pleasure, instead of regarding her as his helpmate and better half. The result is a semi-paralysis of our society.

Harijan, 12 February 1939

To me, this domestic slavery of woman is a symbol of our barbarism. In my opinion the slavery of the kitchen is a remnant of barbarism mainly. It is high time that our womankind was freed from this incubus. Domestic work ought not to take the whole of a woman's time.

Harijan, 8 June 1940

If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. But man has delighted in enslaving you and you have proved willing slaves till the slaves and the slave-holders have become one in the crime of degrading humanity. My special function from childhood has been to make woman realize her dignity. I was once slave-holder myself, but Ba [Gandhi's wife, Kasturbai] proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission. Her task was finished. Now I am in search of a woman who would realize her mission.

Gandhi, *Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur by M. K. Gandhi,*
op. cit., p. 100

To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.

Young India, 10 April 1930

Women and nonviolent struggle

My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and *ahimsa* in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that, in this, woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do this successfully, she must seriously refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in their fields worried or dominated by it. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to dominate the lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. Neither man nor woman has time for such things when he or she is faced with the hard fact of living life in its grim reality.

I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day

to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in *satyagraha* which does not require the learning that books give, but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith.

Harijan, 24 February 1940

And since resistance in *Satyagraha* is offered through self-suffering, it is a weapon pre-eminently open to women. We found last year that women in India, in many instances, surpassed their brothers in sufferings and the two played a noble part in the campaign. For, the idea of self-suffering became contagious and they embarked upon amazing acts of self-denial. Supposing that the women and the children of Europe became fired with the love of humanity, they would take the men by storm and reduce militarism to nothingness in an incredibly short time. The underlying idea is that women, children and others have the same soul, the same potentiality. The question is one of drawing out the limitless power of truth.

Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice*
(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942), p. 187

It is for American women to show what power women can be in the world. But that can only be when you cease to be the toys of men's idle hours. You have got freedom. You can become a power for peace by refusing to be carried away by the flood-tide of the pseudo-science glorifying self-indulgence that is engulfing the West today and apply your minds instead to the science of non-violence; for forgiveness is your nature. By aping men, you neither become men nor can you function as your real selves and develop your special talent that God has given you. God has vouchsafed to women the power of non-violence more than to man. It is all the more effective because it is mute. Women are the natural messengers of the gospel of non-violence if only they will realize their high estate.

Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*,
op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 103

My good nurse in the Sassoon hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years ago, told me the story of a woman who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo a painful operation. The only anaesthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine

often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless.

Harijan, 24 February 1940

New Delhi, 18 July 1947

If only the women of the world would come together, they could display such heroic non-violence as to kick away the atom bomb like a mere ball. Women have been so gifted by God. If an ancestral treasure lying buried in a corner of the house unknown to the members of the family were suddenly discovered, what a celebration it would occasion. Similarly, women's marvellous power is lying dormant. If the women of Asia wake up, they will dazzle the world. My experiment in non-violence would be instantly successful if I could secure women's help.

Message to Chinese women
(originally in Gujarati, later translated into English),
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 88, p. 366

The meaning of equality

16 March 1939

It is possible and necessary to treat human beings on terms of equality, but this can never apply to their morals. One would be affectionate and attentive to a rascal and to a saint; but one cannot and must not put saintliness and rascality on the same footing.

Fragment of a letter, *Diary of Mahadev Desai*,
Vol. 1, p. 15

King on human equality

For King, the descendant of slaves, equality was central. Yet it was also inseparable from justice. At the first meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association, on 5 December 1955 at the Holt Street Baptist Church, King wove together the strands of the beliefs that would form the fabric of his leadership during the next thirteen fruitful years. He appealed to an African-American Christian faith in Love and justice and also to the American democratic tradition: 'We the disinherited of this land . . . are tired of going through the long night of captivity . . . we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality.'[32]

32. Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Vincent Harding, Darlene Clark Hine and Toby Kleban Levine (eds.), *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987; rev. ed., 1991), pp. 48–51.

In reality you cannot have economic and political equality without having some form of social equality. I think this is inevitable, and I don't think our society will rise to its full maturity until we come to see that men are made to live together as brothers and that we can have genuine inter-group, inter-personal living and still be in the kind of society which we all long to achieve.

Excerpt from 'Meet the Press' television interview,
25 August 1963, New York

Now let me suggest first that if we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather that sectional. Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective. No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone, and as long as we try, the more we are going to have war in this world. Now the judgment of God is upon us, and we must either learn to live together as brothers or we are all going to perish together as fools. . . .

Now let me say that the next thing we must be concerned about if we are to have peace on earth and good will toward men is the nonviolent affirmation of the sacredness of all human life. Every man is somebody because he is a child of God. And so when we say 'Thou shalt not kill', we're really saying that human life is too sacred to be taken on the battlefields of the world. Man is more than a tiny vagary of whirling electrons or a wisp of smoke from a limitless smoldering. Man is a child of God, made in His image, and therefore must be respected as such. Until men see this everywhere, until nations see this everywhere, we will be fighting wars. One day somebody should remind us that, even though there may be political and ideological differences between us, the Vietnamese are our brothers, the Russians are our brothers, the Chinese are our brothers; and one day we've got to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. But in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. In Christ there is neither male nor female. In Christ there is neither Communist nor capitalist. In Christ, somehow, there is neither bound nor free. We are all one in Christ Jesus. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won't exploit people, we won't trample over people with the iron feet of oppression, we won't kill anybody.

King, 'A Time to Break Silence', 4 April 1967

Gandhi on the human family

Even in the deepest conflict, Gandhi advocated that everything possible should be done to prevent chasms from opening between the opposing parties. Although polarization is often admired in the West as an expression of deep conviction, Gandhi wanted never to lose contact with his opponent. His basic

differentiation between the evil and the evil-doer was based on his belief that the issue in a conflict must be kept separate from the persons in the contest: Fight the problem, not the human being.

National borders were secondary to Gandhi, since he believed that all people are part of one family, united as brothers and sisters. The unity of the human family means that even in a struggle, not only should one be able to feel empathy with one's brother or sister who is in opposition, but one should be open to changing oneself as a result of the interaction.

My goal is friendship with the whole world and I can combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong.

Young India, 10 March 1920

My mission is not merely brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. But through realization of freedom of India I hope to realize and carry on the mission of brotherhood of man.

Young India, 4 April 1929

Love has no boundary. My nationalism includes the love of all the nations of the earth irrespective of creed.

A letter, 2 May 1935,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 61, p. 27

Though there is repulsion enough in Nature, she lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist. Man does not live by destruction. Self-love compels regard for others. Nations cohere because there is mutual regard among individuals composing them. Some day we must extend the national law to the universe, even as we have extended the family law to form nations – a larger family.

Young India, 2 March 1922

We are all members of the vast human family. I decline to draw any distinctions. I cannot claim any superiority for Indians. We have the same virtues and the same vices.

Harijan, 29 September 1940

Nothing can be farther from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own.

Young India, 1 September 1921

14 August 1932

It won't do for anyone to say I am only what I am. That is a cry of despair. A seeker of truth will say, 'I will be what I ought to be.' My appeal is for you to come out of your shell and see yourself in every face about you. How can you be lonely in the midst of so much life? All our philosophy is vain, if it does not enable us to rejoice in the company of fellow beings and their service.

A Letter, *Diary of Mahadev Desai,* op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 361; Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,* op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 198–9

The different races of mankind are like different branches of a tree. Once we recognize the common parent stock from which we are sprung, we realize the basic unity of the human family, and there is no room left for enmities and unhealthy competition.

Harijan, 18 February 1919

There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers.

Young India, 31 December 1931

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. . . . I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world-languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India. . . . But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.

Young India, 1 June 1921

My *Swaraj* is to keep intact the genius of our civilization. I want to write many new things, but they must all be written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with a decent interest.

Young India, 26 June 1921

Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation.

Young India, 12 January 1928

True nationalism

We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so, a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love therefore of nationalism, or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be, the whole country may die, so that the human races may live. There is no room for race-hatred there. Let that be our nationalism.

Young India, 10 September 1925

It is impossible for one to be an internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact, that is, when peoples belonging to different countries have organized themselves and are able to act as one man. It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of, and rise on the ruin of, the other.

Young India, 18 June 1925

My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities. The conception of my patriotism is nothing if it is not always in every case, without exception, consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large.

Young India, 4 April 1929

Brotherhood versus nationalism

Brotherhood is just now only a distant aspiration. To me it is a test of true spirituality. All our prayers, fasting and observances are empty nothings so long as we do not feel a live kinship with all life. But we have not even arrived at that intellectual belief, let alone a heart realization. We are still selective. A selective brotherhood is a selfish partnership. Brotherhood requires no consideration or response. If it did, we could not love those whom we consider as vile men and women. In the midst of strife and jealousy, it is a most difficult performance. And yet true religion demands nothing less

from us. Therefore, each one of us has to endeavour to realize this truth for ourselves irrespective of what others do.

Letter to Esther Menon,[33] 4 August 1932,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 50, p. 328

I believe in absolute oneness of God and, therefore, also of humanity. What though we may have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source.

Young India, 25 September 1925

Nonexploitation

Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, 29 March 1928

There can be no living harmony between races and nations unless the main cause is removed, namely, exploitation of the weak by the strong. We must revise the interpretation of the so-called doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest.'
M. K. Gandhi

Message to Marcelle Capy,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 36, p. 121

Politics for service and not for power

The (Natal Indian) Congress, however, was a representative institution and fully representative of things that interested the people, because it constituted itself the trustee of the welfare of those men. But I must not linger over the history of that institution. Even in that small body we found bickerings and a desire more for power than for service, a desire more for self-aggrandizement than for self-effacement, and I have found during my 12 years' association with the parent body also that there is a continuous desire for self-seeking and self-aggrandizement; and for you as for us who are still striving to find our feet, who have still to make good the claims for self-expression and self-government, self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and self-suppression are really absolutely necessary and indispensable for our existence and for our progress.

Speech to Ceylon National Congress, Colombo, [Sri Lanka],
Young India, l December 1927

Yes. I claim to be a practical idealist. I believe in compromise so long as it does not involve the sacrifice of principles. I may not get a world government that I want just now but if it is a government that would just touch my ideal, I would accept it as a compromise. Therefore, although I am not

33. The addressee had asked 'why the idea of brotherhood did not take root among nations despite the example set by Bapu [Gandhi], Kagawa, Albert Schweitzer and others'. Mahadev Haribhai Desai, *The Diary of Mahadev Desai* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953), Vol. 1, p. 270.

enamoured of a world federation, I shall be prepared to accept it if it is built on an essentially non-violent basis.

Interview with Ralph Coniston,
Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*,
op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 113–16

Isolated independence is not the goal of the world States. It is voluntary interdependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent States warring one against another, but a Federation of friendly interdependent States.

Young India, 17 July 1924

Why an army where there is rule by the people?

As I said at the Asian Relations Conference, a world federation is possible of realization and in that case it would not be necessary for countries to maintain armed forces. Some countries today describe themselves as democratic, but of course one does not become a democrat by simply saying so. What is the need for an army where there is rule by the people? Where the army rules, the people cannot rule. There can be no world federation of countries ruled by armies. The military dictatorships of Germany and Japan had tried to inveigle various countries into friendship with them. But the deception did not last long.

Speech at prayer meeting
(originally in Hindi, later translated into English),
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 88, p. 274

East and West

I do not think that everything Western is to be rejected. I have condemned the Western civilization in no measured terms. I still do so, but it does not mean that everything Western should be rejected. . . . I have learnt a great deal from the West and I am grateful to it. I should think myself unfortunate if contact with, and the literature of, the West had no influence on me.

Young India, 18 November 1926

King on the human family

For King, the individual exists in interdependence with others, and each person's fulfillment is dependent upon the other's. Blacks will not and cannot be free until whites create space for that freedom. Similarly, white citizens cannot be truly free until African-Americans help to create their freedom.

Love as *agape* is overflowing to the human race as one species, one family. As the love of God working in the lives of ordinary human beings, such love prevents estrangement of one human being from another. It means that one can love the person who does the evil while hating the deed.

Single garment of destiny

All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Strangely enough, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

King, 'The Man Who Was a Fool',
address before the Chicago Sunday Evening Club, 29 January 1961,
in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University, Boston

The following speech notes, as King wrote them by hand for his own use, include inaccuracies and misspellings which might have been due to haste or oversight.

Some people . . . are shackled by the chains of a paralyzing self-centeredness. They live within the narrow confines of their personal ambitions and desires. There is nothing more tragic than to find an individual bogged down in the length of life devoid of breath.

So if life is to be complete it must move beyond length to the dimension of breath. I have said that the breath of life is that dimension in which the individual is concerned about the welfare of others. No man has learned to [*strikeout illegible*] live until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

~~No man should become~~ We should never become so involved in our personal ambitions that we forget that other people live in the world. Length without breath is like a self-contained tributary with no outward flow to the ocean; it becomes stagnant, still and stale. It lacks both life and freshness. In order to live creatively and meaningfully self-concern must be wedded to other concern.

When Jesus ~~talked~~ painted that symbolic picture of the great assize[34] he made it clear that the norm for determining the division between the sheep and the goats would be the issue of deeds to others. One would be asked not how many academic degrees [*strikeout illegible*] he obtained or how much money ~~did~~ he ~~you~~ acquired, but how much ~~did you do~~ [he did] for others. Did you feed the hungry? Did you give a cup of cold water to the thirsty? Did you cloth the naked? Did you visit the sick and minister unto the imprisoned? These are the questions placed by the Lord of life. In a sense everyday is judgement day, and we through our deeds and words, our silence and speech are constantly writing in the Book of life. Light has come into the world and every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of constructive selfishness. This

34. This word is circled in the original text.

is the judgement. Life's most persistent and urgent questions is: 'what are you doing for other.'

God has so structured this universe that things don't quite work out right if men are not dilligent [*sic*] in their culmination of the dimension of breath. The 'I' cannot reach [*strikeout illegible*] fulfillment without the 'thou.' The self cannot be self without other selves. Social psychologists tell us that we could not be persons without interacting with other persons. All life is interrelated, and all men are interdependent. And yet we go on, individually and collectively, concerned only about self-preservation rather than other preservation. We continue to travel a road paved with the slippery cement of inordinate selfishness. Most of the tragic problems we are confronting in the world today are here because of man's failure to add breath to length.

This is clearly seen in the racial crisis facing our nation. The tension which we witness in race relations today is a result of the fact that many of our white brothers are concerned only about the length of life, their economic privileged positions, their political power, their social status, their so called 'way of life.' If only they would add breath to length, the other-regarding dimension to the self-regarding dimension, the jingling discords of our nation will be transformed into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

This need for adding breath to length is clearly seen in international relations. No nation can live alone. Mrs. King and I have just returned from a ~~trip to India~~ memorable visit to India. The experience was marvelous. To have had the privilege of meeting and fellowshiping with so many of the wonderful people of that great nation is something that will remain dear to me as long as the cords of memory shall lengthen. But although there were many high and rewarding moments, there were also many depressing moments during our journey through India. How can one avoid being depressed when he sees with his own eyes millions of people going to bed hungry at night? How can one avoid being depressed when he ~~discovers~~ sees with his own eyes millions of people sleeping on the sidewalks at night? How can one avoid being depressed when he discovers that out of India's population of more than 400 million people, almost 350 million make an annual income of less than $70 per year, and most of them have never seen a doctor or a dentist?

Can we in America stand idly by and not be concerned about these conditions? The answer is an emphatic no, because our destiny as a nation is tied up with the destiny of India. As long as India, or any other nation, is insecure we can never be secure. We must use our vast resources of wealth to aid the undeveloped countries of the world. Maybe we have spent far too much of our national budget establishing military bases around the world, rather than establishing bases of genuine concern and understanding.

In the final analysis all men are interdependent and are thereby involved in a single process. ~~No nation~~ We are inevitably our brother's

keeper because of the interrelated structure of reality. No nation or individual is independent; we are interdependent.

King, 'Three Dimensions of a Complete Life', Chicago, 19 April 1959, in Southern Christian Leadership Conference records, Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta. This was also the sermon preached by King when first invited to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in January 1954

We talk a great deal about our rights, and rightly so. We proudly proclaim that three-fourths of the peoples of the world are colored. We have the privilege of noticing in our generation the great drama of freedom and independence as it unfolds in Asia and Africa. All of those things are in line with the unfolding work of Providence. We must be sure, however, that we accept them in the right spirit. We must not seek to use our emerging freedom and our growing power to do the same thing to the white minority that has been done to us for so many centuries. Our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man. We must not become victimized with a philosophy of black supremacy. God is not interested in merely freeing black men and brown men and yellow men; God is interested in freeing the whole human race. We must work with determination to create a society in which all men will live together as brothers and respect the dignity and worth of human personality.

King, address at a prayer pilgrimage at Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., 15 May 1957, in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, Boston University, Boston

Gandhi on global prospects for nonviolence

Gandhi prided himself that where nonviolence was most effective, no side suffered from the results. Implicit in the notion of peaceful transfers of power is the idea that power can shift without bloodshed: 'A programme of non-violent revolution is not a programme of seizure of power,' according to Gandhi, 'it is a programme of transformation of relationships, ending in a peaceful transfer of power.'

Nonviolence in a war-torn world

You are right in pointing out that there is unheard of devastation going on in the world. But that is the real moment for testing my faith in non-violence. Surprising as it may appear to my critics, my faith in non-violence remains absolutely undimmed. Of course non-violence may not come in my lifetime in the measure I would like to see it come, but that is a different matter.

Interview, *New York Times*, n.d.; *Harijan*, 27 April 1940

My mission is to convert every Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim or any other, even Englishmen and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious. If I am accused of being too ambitious I should plead guilty. If I am told that my dream can never materialise, I would answer 'that is possible', and go my way. I am a seasoned soldier of non-violence and I have evidence enough to sustain my faith.

Harijan, 13 January 1940

Even so did I participate in the three acts of war, I could not, it would be madness for me to, sever my connexions with the society to which I belong. And on those three occasions I had no thought of non-cooperating with the British Government. My position regarding the government is totally different today and hence I should not voluntarily participate in its wars and I should risk imprisonment and even the gallows if I was forced to take up arms or otherwise take part in its military operations.

But that still does not solve the riddle. If there was a national threat whilst I should not take any direct part in any war, I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do. It is not possible to make a person or a society non-violent by compulsion.

Young India, 13 September 1928

Sh. V. N. S. Chary, Madras
Ashram, Sabarmati, 9 April 1926

Dear Friend,

I have your letter. I too have seen many a lizard going for cockroaches and have watched cockroaches going for lesser forms, but I have not felt called upon to prevent the operation of the law of the larger living on the smaller. I do not claim to penetrate into the awful mystery but from watching these very operations, I learn that the law of the beast is not the law of the Man; that Man has by painful striving to surmount and survive the animal in him and from the tragedy of the *himsa* which is being acted around him he has to learn the supreme lesson of *ahimsa* for himself. Man must, therefore, if he is to realize his dignity and his own mission, cease to take part in the destruction and refuse to prey upon his weaker fellow creatures. He can only keep that as an ideal for himself and endeavour day after day to reach it.

Yours Sincerely,
MKG

Letter to V. S. Chary,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 30, p. 262

Gandhi and communism

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short-violent-cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.

Young India, 11 December 1924

Question: What is your opinion about the social economics of Bolshevism and how far do you think they are fit to be copied by our country?

Answer: I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain: the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes.

Young India, 15 November 1928

Introspection and self-criticism about the period following the 1930 Salt March

If, therefore, the world's blood did not boil over the brutalities of the past year, it was not because the world was brutal or heartless but because our non-violence, widespread though it was, good enough though it was for the purpose intended, was not the non-violence of the strong and the knowing. It did not spring from a living faith. It was but a policy, a temporary expedient. Though we did not retaliate, we had harboured anger, our speech was not free from violence, our thoughts still less so. We generally refrained from violent action, because we were under discipline. The world marvelled even at this limited exhibition of non-violence and gave us, without any propaganda, the support and sympathy that we deserved and needed.

The rest is a matter of the rule of three. If we had the support that we received for the limited and mechanical non-violence we were able to practise during the recent struggle, how much more support should we command when we have risen to the full height of *ahimsa*? Then the world's blood will certainly boil. I know we are still far away from that divine event. . . . When we are saturated with *ahimsa* we shall not be non-violent in our fight with the bureaucracy and violent among ourselves. When we have a living faith in non-violence, it will grow from day to day till it fills the whole world. It will be the mightiest propaganda that the world will have witnessed. I live in the belief that we will realize that vital *ahimsa*.

'Power of *Ahimsa*', *Young India*, 7 May 1931

On the atom bomb

Question: Is the world progressing? Has the making of life and struggle for existence easier in the modern world resulted in the dulling of man's instincts and sensibilities?

Answer: If that is your comment, I will subscribe to it.

Question: And the atom bomb?

Answer: Oh, on that point you can proclaim to the whole world without hesitation that I am beyond repair. I regard the employment of the atom bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children as the most diabolical use of science.

Question: What is the antidote? Has it antiquated non-violence?

Answer: No. It is the only thing the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'Unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind.'

Harijan, 29 September 1946;
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 85, pp. 370–1

17 April 1947

My faith in non-violence and truth is being strengthened all the more in spite of the increasing number of atom bombs. I have not a shadow of doubt that there is no power superior to the power of truth and non-violence in the world. See what a great difference there is between the two: one is moral and spiritual force, and is motivated by infinite soul-force; the other is a product of physical and artificial power, which is perishable. The soul is imperishable. This doctrine is not my invention; it is a doctrine enunciated in our *Vedas* and *Shastras*. When soul-force awakens, it becomes irresistible and conquers the world. This power is inherent in every human being. But one can succeed only if one tries to realize this ideal in each and every act in one's life without being affected in the least by praise or censure.

Talk with Congress Party workers,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 87, p. 295

So far as I can see the Atom Bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might.

Harijan, 7 July 1946

The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the Bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence.

Harijan, 7 July 1946

On mutual deterrence

It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in *ahimsa* (non-violence) as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn it away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of disgust is worn out.

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 84, p. 393

Need for research in nonviolence

Research and discoveries are undertaken everywhere. Look at Germany. How may specialists are there in that country. There they are in need of specialists in the science of violence. We too could do research and make progress in the field of non-violence if we can have a small centre. We have to link the spinning-wheel and related activities with non-violence and ultimately with God.

You will have to consider if all these things are possible. You know that even a society based on violence functions only with the help of experts. We want to bring about a new social order based on truth and non-violence. We need experts to develop this into a science. The world as it functions today represents a mixture of violence and non-violence. The external surface of the world suggests its internal state. A country like Germany which regards violence as God is engaged only in developing violence and glorifying it. We are watching the efforts that the votaries of violence are making. We must also know that those given to violence are watching our activities. They are observing what we are doing for developing our science.

But the way of violence is old and established. It is not so difficult to do research in it. The way of non-violence is new. The science of non-violence is yet taking shape. We are still not conversant with all its aspects. There is a wide scope for research and experiment in this field. You can apply all your talents to it.

For me non-violence is something to be shunned if it is a private virtue. My concept of non-violence is universal. It belongs to the millions. I am here just to serve them. Anything that cannot reach the millions is not for me. It should be so for my colleagues as well. We were born to prove that truth and non-violence are not just rules for personal conduct. They can become the policy of a group, a community, a nation. We have not yet proved this, but that alone can be the aim of our life. Those who do not have this faith or those who cannot acquire it should be good enough to remove themselves. But I have only this dream. I have regarded this alone as my duty. I shall not leave it even if the whole world abandons me. So profound is my faith I would live only to attain this and die only in that endeavour. My faith gives me new vision every day. Slow, in my old age, I am not likely to do anything else. It would be another thing if my mind is corrupted or I have a new vision. But today I am seeing ever new miracles of non-violence.

CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 71, pp. 263–4

I believe my message to be universal

But I feel that I have as yet no message to deliver personally to the West. I believe my message to be universal but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete. If I came to the conclusion that India had no use for my message, I should not care to go elsewhere in search of listeners even though I still retained faith in it.

'To European Friends',
Young India, 26 April 1928

You cannot breed peace out of non-peace. The attempt is like gathering grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

Harijan, 4 June 1938

How to prevent the next war

Question: How to prevent the next war?

Answer: By doing the right thing, irrespective of what the world will do. Each individual must act according to his ability without waiting for others if he wants to move them to act. There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes when he reduces himself to zero. If the third war comes it will be the end of the world. The world cannot stand a third war. For me the second war has not stopped, it still goes on.

'Talk with an American Journalist',
Harijan, 6 October 1946

Nonviolence: make new history

If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history but make new history. We must add to the inheritance left by our ancestors.

Young India, 6 May 1926

In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult, is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence, but I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence.

Harijan, 25 August 1940

Permanent peace

Peace will never come until the Great Powers courageously decide to disarm themselves.

Harijan, 24 December 1938

If recognized leaders of mankind, who have control over engines of destruction, were to wholly renounce their use with full knowledge of implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the Great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic designs.

Harijan, 16 May 1936

Gandhi is asked whether a state can be nonviolent

A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it. A Government representing such a society will use the least amount of force. But no Government worth its name can suffer anarchy to prevail. Hence I have said that even under a Government based primarily on non-violence, a small police force will be necessary.

Harijan, 9 March 1940

Independent India

Question: Supposing India does become free in your lifetime, what will you devote the rest of your years to?

Answer: If India becomes free in my lifetime and I have still energy left in me, of course I would take my due share, though outside the official world, in building up the nation on a strictly non-violent basis.

Interview, *New York Times*, n.d.;
Harijan, 27 April 1940

The practicability of nonviolence

The usefulness of the non-violent method seems to be granted by all the critics (but) they gratuitously assume the impossibility of human nature, as it is constituted, responding to the strain involved in non-violent preparation. But that is begging the question, I say, 'you have never tried the method on any scale. In so far as it has been tried, it has shown promising results'.

Harijan, 21 July 1940

Soldier of nonviolence

I must continue to argue till I convert opponents or I own defeat. For my mission is to convert every Indian, even Englishmen and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious. If I am accused of being too ambitious, I should plead guilty. If I am told that my dream can never materialize, I would answer 'that is possible', and go my way. I am a seasoned soldier of non-violence, and I have evidence enough to sustain my faith. Whether, therefore, I have one comrade or more or none, I just continue my experiment.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,* op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 273

In every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts but it is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest . . . have always stood alone.

Young India, 10 October 1929

King on global prospects for nonviolence

Love took on the proportions of a globally unifying ideology for King. By maintaining disciplined and intelligent Love, he believed, international relations could be managed wisely and with a minimum of destructiveness. Nonviolent direct action not only makes those in power listen or respond to the ruled, it is a stronger basis for durable solutions. It virtually always improves the odds for a lasting peace at the time of negotiation. This applies to all areas of conflict in today's world.

Occasionally violence is temporarily successful, but never permanently so. It often brings temporary victory, but never permanent peace. . . . If the American Negro and other victims of oppression succumb to the temptation of using violence in the struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and their chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

King, 'Non-Violence: The Christian Way in Human Relations', *Presbyterian Life,* 8 February 1958

I am convinced that for practical as well as moral reasons, nonviolence offers the only road to freedom for my people. In violent warfare, one must be prepared to face ruthlessly the fact that there will be casualties by the thousands. In Viet Nam, the United States has evidently decided that it is willing to slaughter millions, sacrifice some two hundred thousand men and twenty billion dollars a year to secure the freedom of some fourteen million Vietnamese. This is to fight a war on Asian soil, where Asians are in the majority. Anyone leading a violent conflict must be willing to make a similar assessment regarding the possible casualties to a minority population confronting a well-armed, wealthy majority with a fanatical right wing that is capable of exterminating the entire black population and which would not hesitate such an attempt if the survival of white Western materialism were at stake. . . .

King, 'Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom',
Ebony, October 1966

I do not want to give the impression that nonviolence will work miracles overnight. Men are not easily moved from their mental ruts or purged of their prejudiced and irrational feelings. When the underprivileged demand freedom, the privileged first react with bitterness and resistance. Even when the demands are couched in nonviolent terms, the initial response is the same. I am sure that many of our white brothers in Montgomery and across the South are still bitter toward Negro leaders, even though these leaders have sought to follow a way of love and nonviolence. So the nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally, it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality.

King, 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence',
Christian Century, 13 April 1960

The practical aspect of nonviolent resistance is that it exposes the moral defenses at the same time, and it breaks down his morale. He has no answer for it. If he puts you in jail, that's all right; if he lets you out, that's all right too. If he beats you, you accept that; if he doesn't beat you – fine. And so you go on, leaving him with no answer. But if you use violence, he does have an answer. He has the state militia; he has police brutality.

King, 'The American Dream',
speech at Lincoln University, 6 June 1961,
Martin Luther King Jr, Papers, 1954–1968, Boston University, Boston

In a world facing the revolt of ragged and hungry masses of God's children; in a world torn between the tensions of East and West, white and colored, individualists and collectivists; in a world whose cultural and spiritual power lags so far behind her technological capabilities that we live each day to day on the verge of nuclear co-annihilation; in this world, nonviolence is no longer an option for intellectual analysis, it is an imperative for action.

King, *The Trumpet of Conscience*
(San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1967), p. 64

Gandhi on violence and cowardice

Gandhi was opposed to abject submission to oppression and injustice. This was for him the basic determination – what business executives today would call the 'bottom line', the end of the statement after all losses and gains are tallied. If someone were unable to summon the courage to resist nonviolently, Gandhi would counsel such a person to resort to violence rather than submit. He thought it better to express enmity honestly than to be a hypocrite and refuse confrontation out of cowardice. He once told Richard Gregg, 'If you have a sword in your bosom, take it out and use it.'[35]

Gandhi was eager to escape from the inaccurate and misleading connotations of the term *passive resistance.* He knew that the forms of resistance that he advocated required enormous courage.

Cowardice is worse than violence

Chi,

If ever our sister or any helpless person is assaulted by someone, we should try to save her even at the cost of our life. Whenever one can kill, one can also lay down one's own life instead. If, however, we do not have the strength to lay down our life, we should help even by using violence. Such violence does not cease to be violence. It remains an evil. But cowardice is worse than violence.

Blessings from Bapu

A letter from M. K. Gandhi, 18 April 1932,
CWMG, op. cit., Vol. 49, pp. 320–1

It is my conviction that nothing enduring can be built upon violence.

Young India, 15 November 1928

35. Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 50.

'Ahimsa' belongs to the brave

The news of the recent events in Bombay has filled me with shame and humiliation as it must have you too. Let me hope that none of those who are here took part in these disgraceful happenings. But that alone would not entitle you to my congratulations. We have reached a stage when nobody can afford to sit on the fence or take refuge in the 'ambiguous middle'. One has to speak out and stand up for one's convictions. Inaction at a time of conflagration is inexcusable. Is it too difficult an ideal to follow? Let me tell you, however, that this is the only course that will take us safely through the present difficult times.

It has become the fashion these days to ascribe all such ugly manifestations to the activities of hooligans. It hardly becomes us to take refuge in that moral alibi. Who are the hooligans after all? They are our own countrymen and, so long as any countryman of ours indulges in such acts, we cannot disown responsibility for them consistently with our claim that we are one people. It matters little whether those who were responsible for the happenings are denounced as *goondas* or praised as patriots – praise and blame must equally belong to us all. The only . . . course for those who are aspiring to be free is to accept either whilst doing our duty.

In eating, sleeping and in the performance of other physical functions, man is not different from the brute. What distinguishes him from the brute is his ceaseless striving to rise above the brute on the moral plane. Mankind is at the cross-roads. It has to make its choice between the law of the jungle and the law of humanity. We in India deliberately adopted the latter twenty-five years back but, I am afraid, that whilst we profess to follow the higher way, our practice has not always conformed to our profession. We have always proclaimed from the house-tops that non-violence is the way of the brave, but there are some amongst us who have brought *ahimsa* into disrepute by using it as a weapon of the weak. In my opinion, to remain a passive spectator of the kind of crimes that Bombay has witnessed of late is cowardice.

Let me say in all humility that *ahimsa* belongs to the brave. Pritam has sung: 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward'. By the way of the Lord is here meant the way of non-violence and truth. I have said before that I do not envisage God other than truth and non-violence. If you have accepted the doctrine of *ahimsa* without a full realization of its implications, you are at liberty to repudiate it.

I believe in confessing one's mistakes and correcting them. Such confession strengthens one and purifies the soul. *Ahimsa* calls for the strength and courage to suffer without retaliation, to receive blows without returning any. But that does not exhaust its meaning. Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly. We have to cultivate that courage, if we are to win India's independence through truth and non-violence as proclaimed by the Congress. It is an ideal worth living for and dying for. Every one of you who has accepted

that ideal should feel that inasmuch as a single English woman or child is assaulted, it is a challenge to your creed of non-violence, and you should protect the threatened victim even at the cost of your life. Then alone you will have the right to sing: 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward'. To attack defenceless English women and children, because one has a grievance against the present Government, hardly becomes a human being.

Harijan, 7 April 1946

To answer brutality with brutality is to admit one's moral and intellectual bankruptcy and it can only start a vicious circle.

Harijan, 1 June 1947

On brute force

Brute force has been the ruling factor in the world for thousands of years, and mankind has been reaping its bitter harvest all along, as he who runs may read. There is little hope of anything good coming out of it in the future. If light can come out of darkness, then alone can love emerge from hatred.

Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa,*
op. cit., p. 289

Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal. Though we have the human form, without the attainment of the virtue of non-violence, we still share the qualities of our remote reputed ancestor – the ourangoutang [*sic*].

Harijan, 8 October 1938

Nonviolence is impossible without unadulterated fearlessness

Non-violence and cowardice go ill together. I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true non-violence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness.

Harijan, 15 July 1939

Nonviolence has no room for cowardice or weakness

My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for a coward. I have therefore said more than once in these pages that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the force of suffering, that is, non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting.

Young India, 16 June 1927

I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defend me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence. Hence it was that I took part in the Boer War, the so-called Zulu Rebellion and the late war. Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier.

Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 5–8

The doctrine of non-violence is not for the weak and the cowardly; it is meant for the brave and the strong. The bravest man allows himself to be killed without killing. And he desists from killing or injuring, because he knows that it is wrong to injure.

Young India, 15 December 1920

'Himsa' or violence

Himsa does not merely mean indulgence in physical violence; resort to trickery, falsehood, intrigue, chicanery and deceitfulness – in short, all unfair and foul means – come under the category of *Himsa*.

Harijan, 20 May 1939

The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form

I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress.

The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.

The Modern Review, Calcutta, October 1935

King on violence and cowardice

To King, 'not only is violence impractical, but it is immoral.' He agreed with Gandhi that nonviolent struggle required greater courage than violence. He thought violence to be cowardice. King counseled those who felt angry and hopeless in the face of racial injustice to put their energies into nonviolent strategies. He thought individual acts of violence merely responded to the symptoms of deeper ills, whereas a coherent use of nonviolent direct action could address the core problem.

The following excerpt is King's statement for *Fellowship,* the journal of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and is based on a half-hour interview recorded by Glenn E. Smiley on 28 February 1956. In it, King recounts the bombing at the Montgomery parsonage on 30 January 1956.

This is a spiritual movement, and we intend to keep these things in the forefront. We know that violence will defeat our purpose. We know that in our struggle in America and in our specific struggle here in Montgomery, violence will not only be impractical but immoral. We are outnumbered; we do not have access to the instruments of violence. Even more than that, not only is violence impractical, but it is *immoral*; for it is my firm conviction that to seek to retaliate with violence does nothing but intensify the existence of evil and hate in the universe. . . .

Some twenty-six of the ministers and almost one hundred of the citizens of the city were indicted in this boycott. But we realized in the beginning that we would confront experiences that make for great sacrifices, experiences that are not altogether pleasant. We decided among ourselves that we would stand up to the finish, and that is what we are determined to do. In the midst of the indictments, we still hold to this nonviolent attitude, and this primacy of love.

King, 'Walk for Freedom', *Fellowship,* Vol. 22 (May 1956),
in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

I am convinced that even very violent temperaments can be channeled through nonviolent discipline, if the movement is moving, if they can act constructively and express through an effective channel their very legitimate anger.

King, *Trumpet of Conscience*,
op. cit., p. 58

Retaliatory violence was rejected by King in a speech delivered at the annual dinner of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, which commemorated the second anniversary of the Supreme Court's school-desegregation decision.

We must not think in terms of retaliatory violence. . . . Violence creates many more problems than it solves. There is a voice crying through the vista of time saying: 'He who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword.'[36] History is replete with the bleached bones of nations who failed to follow this truth.

King, 'The "New Negro" of the South: Behind the Montgomery Story', *Socialist Call*, Vol. 24 (June 1956)

After a local judge granted the request of the city of Montgomery for a temporary injunction halting the car-pooling of black residents who were boycotting the municipal buses, a reporter informed King that the Supreme Court had ruled against school segregation. King and other leaders decided to continue the boycott until the high court's decision actually took effect. They scheduled two concurrent mass meetings for the next day, at Hutchinson Street Baptist Church and Holt Street Baptist Church. On 14 November 1956, King addressed between 2,000 and 4,000 people at each church, and asked participants to vote on the recommendation of the leadership. The motion carried unanimously at both meetings. Anticipating the imminent desegregation of the city's buses, King asks for nonviolence when the people reboard the vehicles. He tells them, 'I'm not asking you to be a coward. . . . You can be courageous and yet nonviolent.'

We've talked a lot about nonviolence, haven't we? And I said it, I hope that we will live it now, because this is really the *practical* aspect of our movement. This is the *testing point* of our movement. And if we go back to the buses and somehow become so weak that when somebody strikes us we gonna strike them back, or when somebody says an insulting word to us we gonna do the same thing, we will destroy the spirit of our movement and I know it's hard, I know that. And I know you're looking at me like I'm somewhat crazy when I say that. I know that. I know that. You see it's sort of the natural thing to do when you're hit. You feel that you're supposed to hit back. That's the way we're taught, we're brought up like that. And that is certainly a corollary of our Western materialism. We have been brought up on the basis that we live, that violence is the way to solve problems. And we unconsciously feel that we must do it this way and if we don't hit back we are not strong, we're weak. And that's the way we've been brought up. But I want to tell you this evening, that the strong man is the man who will not hit back. Who can stand up for his rights and yet not hit back. Now I'm not asking you to be a coward. If cowardice was the alternative to violence, I'd say to you tonight, use violence. If that were the only alternative, I'd say, use violence. But I'm saying to you that cowardice is

36. Matthew 26:52 and Revelation 13:10.

not the alternative. Cowardice is as evil as violence. What I'm saying to you this evening is that you can be courageous and yet nonviolent. You can take a seat on the bus, and sit there because it's your right to sit there, and refuse to move, no matter who tells you to move, because it's your right and yet not hit back if you are hit yourself. Now that's what I call courage. That's really courage. And I tell you, if we hit back we will be shamed, we will be shamed before the world. I'm serious about this. I'm not telling you something that I don't live. I'm not telling you something that I don't live. I'm aware of the fact that the Ku Klux Klan is riding in Montgomery. I'm aware of the fact that a week never passes that somebody's not telling me to get out of town, or that I'm gonna be killed next place I move. But I don't have any guns in my pockets. I don't have any guards on my side. But I have the *God* of the Universe on my side. I'm serious about that. I can walk the streets of Montgomery without fear. I don't worry about a thing. They can bomb my house. They can kill my body. But they can never kill the spirit of freedom that is in my people.

I'm saying that because I believe it firmly and I'm not telling you something that I don't do myself. I'm telling you, I'm telling you to live by nonviolence. I say that is the command before us. And there is still a voice crying through the vista of time, saying to every potential Peter, 'Put up your sword!' (*Yes*). . . . I call upon you to choose nonviolence.

King, address to mass meeting in Montgomery,
in *Papers 3*, op. cit.

Question: I've been in trouble one way or another all my life. My problem is that I don't like to fight unless I have to. Like you said in a speech once, when someone hates you don't fight back but love them and pray for them. Well, I do that, but it doesn't seem to help. Last night I got into an argument with one of my friends. When I walked off, he hit me over the head with an iron pipe. The fellows told me I should have killed him, but instead I went home and prayed for him. What should I do to get people to understand me?

Answer: It is very difficult to get a 'don't fight back philosophy' over to a group of people who have come up under a tradition that strongly expresses a philosophy of hitting back. It is very difficult to get over a philosophy of nonviolence to people who have been taught from the cradle that violence must be met with violence. But you must somehow continue to follow this way in word and in deed. You must get over to your comrades that the man who does not hit back is the strong man. To return violence for violence does nothing but intensify the existence of violence and evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of violence and hate. It is ultimately the strong man who can do this. He who accepts violence without returning it is much stronger than he who inflicts it.

King, 'Advice for Living', *Ebony*, February 1958

Following the successful integration of buses in Montgomery, a new spirit of dignity and independence was felt in the heart of every Negro. This small beginning was too much for the recalcitrant segregationist to accept. When, therefore, the students sought to integrate lunch counters, there was unleashed against them and the Negro community as a whole a reign of terror backed by a military display of armed force which would have been appropriate to combat an armed invasion by a foreign enemy. We are not secure even in our churches. Armed police were posted outside, and in one case a platoon invaded a church to protest a meeting in progress there. In this context it can be understood how furious rage would result when an advertisement describing these conditions, and in strong terms denouncing them, was published in *The New York Times.*[37]

King, excerpt from statement at lawyers' advisory committee meeting, 8 May 1961, New York

From the beginning people responded to the philosophy with amazing ardor. To be sure, there were some who were slow to concur. Occasionally members of the executive board would say to me in private that we needed a more militant approach. They looked upon nonviolence as weak and compromising. Others felt that at least a modicum of violence would convince the white people that the Negroes meant business and were not afraid. A member of my church came to me one day and solemnly suggested that it would be to our advantage to 'kill off' eight or ten white people. 'This is the only language these white folks will understand', he said. 'If we fail to do this they will think we're afraid. We must show them we're not afraid any longer.' Besides, he thought, if a few white persons were killed the federal government would intervene and this, he was certain, would benefit us.

Still others felt that they could be nonviolent only if they were not attacked personally. They would say: 'If nobody bothers me, I will bother nobody. If nobody hits me, I will hit nobody. But if I am hit, I will hit back.' They thus drew a moral line between aggressive and retaliatory violence. But in spite of these honest disagreements, the vast majority were willing to try the experiment.

King, *Stride toward Freedom,* op. cit., pp. 87–9

37 A Committee to Defend Martin Luther King was established by associates of King's, who paid for a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* entitled 'Heed Their Rising Voices'. It recounted attacks made on him and measures used against protesters in Montgomery. State officials demanded a retraction. Montgomery commissioners sued the newspaper for libel and filed suit against four signers of the advertisement. See David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1986), pp. 131, 135. Judgments went against King and the others. In this speech at the Lotos Club, in New York City, King commented on the $2.5 million libel judgments. The rulings were later overturned.

I am thinking now of some teenage boys in Chicago. They have nicknames like 'Tex', and 'Pueblo', and 'Goat', and 'Teddy.' They hail from the Negro slums. Forsaken by society, they once proudly fought and lived for street gangs like the Vice Lords, the Roman Saints, the Rangers. But this year, they gave us all the gift of nonviolence, which is indeed a gift of love.

I met these boys and heard their stories in discussions we had on some long, cold nights last winter at the slum apartment I rent in the West Side ghetto of Chicago. I was shocked at the venom they poured against the world. At times I shared their despair and felt a sense of hopelessness that these young Americans could ever embrace the concept of nonviolence as the effective and powerful instrument of social reform.

All their lives, boys like this have known life as a madhouse of violence and degradation. Some have never experienced a meaningful family life. Some have police records. Some dropped out of the incredibly bad slum schools, then were deprived of honorable work, then took to the streets.

To the young victim of the slums, this society has so limited the alternatives of his life that the expression of his manhood is reduced to the ability to defend himself physically. No wonder it appears logical to him to strike out, resorting to violence against oppression. That is the only way he thinks he gets recognition.

And so, we have seen occasional rioting – and much more frequently and consistently, brutal acts and crimes by Negroes against Negroes. In many a week in Chicago, as many or more Negro youngsters have been killed in gang fights as were killed in the riots there last summer.

The Freedom movement has tried to bring a message to boys like Tex. First, we explained that violence can be put down by armed might and police work, that physical force can never solve the underlying social problems. Second, we promised that we could prove, by example, that nonviolence works.

The young slum dweller has reason to be suspicious of promises. But these young people in Chicago agreed last winter to give nonviolence a test. Then came the very long, very tense, hot summer of 1966, and the first test for many Chicago youngsters: the Freedom March through Mississippi. Gang members went there in carloads.

Those of us who had been in the movement for years were apprehensive about the behavior of the boys. Before the march ended, they were to be attacked by tear gas. They were to be called upon to protect women and children on the march, with no other weapon than their own bodies. To them, it would be a strange and possibly nonsensical way to respond to violence.

But they reacted splendidly! They learned in Mississippi, and returned to teach in Chicago, the beautiful lesson of acting against evil by renouncing force.

And in Chicago, the test was sterner. These marchers endured not only the filthiest kind of verbal abuse, but also barrages of rocks and sticks and eggs and cherry bombs. They did not reply in words or violent deeds. Once again, their only weapon was their own bodies. I saw boys like Goat leap into the air to catch with their bare hands the bricks and bottles that were sailed toward us.

It was through the Chicago marches that our promise to them – that nonviolence achieves results – was redeemed, and their hopes for a better life were rekindled. For they saw in Chicago, that a humane police force – in contrast to the police in Mississippi – could defend the exercise of constitutional rights as well as enforce the law in the ghetto.

They saw, in prosperous white American communities, that hatred and bigotry could and should be confronted, exposed and dealt with. They saw, in the very heart of a great city, that men of power could be made to listen to the tramp of marching feet and the call for freedom and justice, and use their power to work for a truly Open City for all.

Boys like Teddy, a child of the slums, saw all this because they decided to rise above the cruelties of those slums and to work and march, peacefully, for human dignity. They revitalized my own faith in nonviolence. And these poverty stricken boys enriched us all with a gift of love.

King, 'A Gift of Love',
McCall's, December 1966

During recent months I have come to see more and more the need for the method of nonviolence in international relations. While I was convinced during my student days of the power of nonviolence in group conflicts within nations, I was not yet convinced of its efficacy in conflicts between nations. I felt that while war could never be a positive or absolute good, it could serve as a negative good in the sense of preventing the spread and growth of an evil force. War, I felt, horrible as it is, might be preferable to surrender to a totalitarian system. But more and more I have come to the conclusion that the potential destructiveness of modern weapons of war totally rules out the possibility of war ever serving again as a negative good. If we assume that mankind has a right to survive then we must find an alternative to war and destruction. In a day when sputniks dash through outer space and guided ballistic missiles are carving highways of death through the stratosphere, nobody can win a war. The choice today is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence.

I am no doctrinaire pacifist. I have tried to embrace a realistic pacifism. Moreover, I see the pacifist position not as sinless but as the lesser evil in the circumstances. Therefore I do not claim to be free from the moral dilemmas that the Christian nonpacifist confronts. But I am convinced that

the church cannot remain silent while mankind faces the threat of being plunged into the abyss of nuclear annihilation. If the church is true to its mission it must call for an end to the arms race.

King, 'Pilgrimage to Non-violence',
Christian Century, 13 April 1960

King on freedom

Not since the struggle for the abolition of slavery had the term *freedom* been used with such frequency as employed by King and the rest of the civil rights movement. Often *freedom* signified four or five nuanced shades of meaning: freedom under the law, freedom from racism, freedom from fear, the freedom brought by the gospel, and the freedom to develop oneself to full capacity.

Freedom from fear of death

The final fear that you have to conquer is the fear of death. When a man conquers this he is then free, because he realizes that there is something so dear, something so precious, something so eternally true that it's worth dying for.

Speech at rally, Gadsden, Alabama, 21 June 1963,
in the collection of the Martin Luther King Jr Papers Project,
Stanford University, Stanford, California

We have come today when a piece of freedom is not enough for us as human beings nor for the nation of which we are a part. We have been given pieces, but unlike bread, a slice of which does diminish hunger, a peace of liberty no longer suffices. Freedom is like life. You cannot be given life in installments. You cannot be given breath but not body, nor a heart, but no blood vessels. Freedom is one thing – you have it all or you are not free.

King, 'Hate Is Always Tragic', address to National Press Club,
Time, 3 August 1962

I conceive of this struggle not as a struggle to free 20 million Negroes in the United States, but a struggle to free a hundred and 80 million citizens of this country, and I don't think that anybody in this country can be truly free until the Negro is free.

King, interview for Press Conference USA, 5 July 1963,
Washington, D.C.

Freedom is a priceless possession which every man must possess if he is to be truly human. Tolstoy, the Russian writer, said in *War and Peace*: 'I cannot conceive of a man not being free unless he is dead.' While this statement sounds a bit exaggerated, it gets at a basic truth. What Tolstoy is saying in

substance is that the absence of freedom is the presence of death. Any nation or government that deprives an individual of freedom is in that moment committing an act of moral and spiritual murder. Any individual who is not concerned about his freedom commits an act of moral and spiritual suicide. He, at that moment, forfeits his right to be. The struggle for freedom is not a struggle to attain some ephemeral desire; it is a struggle to maintain one's very selfhood. It is a struggle to avoid a tragic death of the spirit. It is no wonder that there have been those discerning individuals throughout history who have been willing to suffer sacrifice and even face the possibility of physical death in order to gain freedom. They have had the vision to realize that physical death may be more desirable than a permanent death of the spirit. It was under the spell of this conviction that our forefathers would cry out: Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom, and before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my Father and be saved.

And so our most urgent message to this nation can be summarized in these simple words: 'We just want to be free.' We are not seeking to dominate the nation politically or to hamper its social growth; we just want to be free. Our motives are not impure and our intentions are not malicious; we simply want to be free. We are not seeking to be professional agitators or dangerous rabble-rousers; we just want to be free. As we struggle for our freedom, America, we are struggling to prevent you from committing a continuous act of murder. Moreover, we are struggling for the very survival of our selfhood. To paraphrase the words of Shakespeare's *Othello*: 'Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands. But he who filches from me my freedom robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed.' We simply want to be free.

King, address to fiftieth annual convention of the NAACP,
New York, 17 July 1959, text in Martin Luther King Jr, Papers,
Boston University, Boston

The time for freedom has come: the role of student activism

A consciousness of leadership, a sense of destiny have given maturity and dedication to this generation of Negro students which have few precedents. As a minister, I am often given promises of dedication. Instinctively I examine the degree of sincerity. The striking quality in Negro students I have met is the intensity and depth of their commitment. I am no longer surprised to meet attractive, stylishly dressed young girls whose charm and personality would grace a Junior prom and to hear them declare in unmistakingly sincere terms, 'Dr King, I am ready to die if I must.'

Many of the students, when pressed to express their inner feelings, identify themselves with students in Africa, Asia and South America. The liberation struggle in Africa has been the greatest single national influence

on American students. Frequently, I hear them say that if their African brothers can break the bonds of colonialism, surely the American Negro can break free of the bonds of Jim Crow.

King, *New York Times Magazine*,
10 September 1961

Gandhi on education

Gandhi was a 'man of many joys', said one student of the Mahatma.[38] One of them was his delight in the young and belief in their potential as full partners in *satyagraha*. Yet he believed that their education should not be solely a matter of intellect. He accepted John Ruskin's preference for quality rather than quantity and his emphasis on character rather than intelligence.[39] He wanted education to embolden the ability of the young to make decisions for their entire lives. Not surprisingly, Gandhi felt that the ultimate solutions for the problems that had so engrossed him would have to come from education. Gandhi's comments on this area are, thus, reserved for last.

If we are to reach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.

Young India, 19 November 1921

Nothing should be taught to a child by force. He should be interested in everything taught to him. Education should appear to the child like play. Play is an essential part of education.

Harijan, 15 July 1940

There is no school equal to a decent home, and no teachers equal to honest virtuous parents.

Harijan, 23 November 1935

I would develop in the child his hand, his brain and his soul. The hands have almost atrophied. The soul has been altogether ignored.

Young India, 12 March 1925

From my experience of hundreds of children, I know that they have perhaps a finer sense of honour than you or I have. The greatest lessons of life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children.

Young India, 19 November 1931

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38. Arne Naess, *Gandhi and Group Conflict: An Exploration of Satyagraha* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities, 1974), p. 40.
39. Asha Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle* (Delhi: Shree Publishing House, 1981), p. 42.

Jesus never uttered a loftier or a grander truth than when he said that 'wisdom cometh out of the mouths of the babes.' I believe it. I have noticed it in my own experience that if we would approach babes in humility and innocence, we would learn wisdom from them.

Young India, 19 November 1931

Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition.

Harijan, 11 September 1937

The object of basic education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of a handicraft. . . . The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally makes basic education self-sufficient.

Harijan, 6 April 1940

Character building is more important than literacy

Question: What is your goal in education when India obtains self-rule?

Answer: Character building. I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy, academic learning is only a means to this greater end. That is why India's great lack of literacy, deplorable as it is, does not appeal to me nor make me feel that India is unfit for self-rule.

Carlton Washburne, *Remakers of Mankind* (1932), pp. 104–5

Education, according to Gandhiji is not a linear activity. It must address itself to the head, heart and hand, symbolising the senses, the mind and the spirit. It must lead to a harmonious development of body, mind and spirit and develop an interested personality. That integration can best be effected through a life-centred, activity-centred and problem-centred education. That education alone is of value which drags out the faculties of a student so as to enable him or her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department.

The same emphasis on a life-centred education instead of a book-centred education is contained in the following observation of Gandhi: 'The only knowledge and culture by which humanity has advanced is that which springs from honest, conscientious and intelligent performance of whatever duty may come one's way, no matter how humble, rather than from book-learning.' Learning is not a passive process. It takes place through vigorous interaction between the individual and his environment.

A life-centred education alone calls into play and develops the entire personality – 'body, mind and spirit' of the trinity: heart, head and hand. Of these three Gandhiji attached the highest importance to the development of the spirit, the culture of the heart or the building of character.

Harijan, 23 May 1936;
Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase*
(Ahmedabad: Navijivan Publishing House, 1965), pp. 647–8;
Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 190

Gandhi and King both used nonviolence in ways that reached into the communities they wanted to arouse, based on a conviction that if the aggrieved were to behave differently, change would be produced in their adversaries. Although technologies of information were more limited for King than now, and even more so for Gandhi, each man shrewdly understood the significance of informing his adherents and persuading his opponents. Never denying their shared humanity with their adversaries, they deliberately courted the sensibilities of their opponents. As a matter of principle and practicality, they tried to touch the antagonism of the opponent and insisted on separating the deed from the doer, so that possibilities for reconciliation might be enhanced. While they had voice, each was the main propagandist for his movement and chief teacher of his nation.

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Chapter Five

Seven struggles: traditions on which to build

There are many Gandhis, not only those who can be found in the historical Gandhi by interpreting him in different directions. There are also local Gandhis, on all continents, in all countries. Some of them have names; most of them are unknown. There are traditions on which to build.

Johan Galtung[1]

1. Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyapith, Peace Research Centre, 1992), p. 148.

To the surprise of many who thought that Gandhi's and King's approaches were things of the past, their movements consigned to history, the successes of nonviolent direct action grew as the twentieth century came to an end. Chains of oppression and anger were broken and new links forged of legitimacy, justice and even reconciliation and forgiveness. Some movements that had been in the process of formation for years realized momentous results as external and domestic circumstances converged.

In one extraordinary year, 1989 – the 'most revolutionary year in the history of Europe since 1789'[2] – the map of Eastern Europe was redrawn by popular resistance movements. Nonviolent direct action culminated in autumn and early winter as human courage and initiative shaped the course of history. A number of external and domestic circumstances intersected and, without bullets being fired, the Warsaw Pact collapsed, as the reach of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) extended toward the East. Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power as Soviet premier in 1985 had led to the introduction of 'new thinking' in Moscow's foreign policy. Heavily armed *mujaheddin*, or holy warriors, who fought with guerrilla tactics against the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan raised the cost of the occupation of that country, and a defense buildup in the NATO states made clear the implacable resolve of the West. Internally, disagreements and disputes within the Soviet Union on the desirability of maintaining the spoils of its past expansionism fueled the disintegration of the Soviet apparatus. The significance of domestic divisions cannot be overlooked, because nonviolent resistance may be 'most likely to be effective when there is internal conflict in the adversary's camp about the desirability and possibility of maintaining

2. Johan Jørgen Holst, *Civilian-Based Defense in a New Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1990), p. 9 (Monograph Series, 2).

an existing system'.[3] The demise of the Brezhnev Doctrine accompanied the end of the cold war and the breakdown of the East–West system. This meant that the Kremlin's allies in Central and Eastern Europe could no longer assume that they would be receiving military support to suppress dissent, as provided under the Brezhnev Doctrine. The doctrine had set forth the right of Soviet intervention whenever the interest of the Soviet system deemed it 'essential'.

By the 1980s, recognizing the change of policy in Moscow, the regimes of the Warsaw Pact knew they could no longer count on troops and tanks to give the kind of aid that had been sent to East Germany[4] in 1953 to suppress demonstrations, to Hungary in 1956 to support the government, and to Czechoslovakia in 1968 to put down the popular dissent of the 'Prague Spring'. They found themselves, instead, standing alone against the stubborn opposition of their populations. 'Without the changes in the Soviet Union', claims Czech president Václav Havel, 'what has happened in our country would have scarcely happened. And if it did, it certainly would not have followed such a peaceful course.'[5]

Fundamental changes in power relationships altered the backdrop for nonviolent struggle. The 'iron curtain' was no longer impenetrable. President Jimmy Carter's assertion of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords in the late 1970s had the effect of prying open sufficient political space to enable popular resistance to develop in countries under the dominion of the Soviet Union. Surreptitious organizing had been underway in parts of Eastern Europe for some time, and Carter's insistence on human rights as a basic component of US foreign policy enabled it to surface. Social and political forces integral to the peoples of Eastern Europe could grow without hindrance from Moscow's geopolitical or ideological compulsions. Yet even this continental upheaval was not an isolated event. On most of the seven continents, epochal nonviolent mobilizations produced major results. Around the planet could be heard the sound of chains breaking.

New tools, forged in practice

Ingenuity plays a significant role in nonviolent direct action. The capacity to improvise, an essential component of achieving jiu-jitsu, means that thinking, strategies and techniques must evolve; it is only necessary to

3. Adam Roberts, *Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1991), p. 34 (Monograph Series, 4).
4. Note that throughout this book 'East Germany' and 'East German' refer to the former German Democratic Republic.
5. Václav Havel, 'New Year's Address to the Nation', Prague, 1 January 1990, in *Selected Speeches and Writings of Václav Havel, 1990–1995*, edited by Paul Wilson (http://www.czech.c..velcontentsang.htm).

remember how the children's marches in Birmingham, Alabama, were not part of the original plan when they altered the circumstances of the American struggle. No amount of planning can anticipate an opponent's response. In each situation, people create their own inventory of techniques and clarify their principles of resistance. By 1973, Gene Sharp had documented more than 198 methods of nonviolent direct action, and that number is far greater today.[6] The repertoire of nonviolent direct action continues to expand in part because invention at the spur of the moment is a prized and necessary requirement of such struggle. This process makes maximum use of human cleverness and inventiveness in responding to the acts of the opposition, generating new tools forged in practice. Each individual, movement or people must select what is the best path, and draw on its own cultural or religious traditions.

Results may come quickly or they may require time. Generations may pass before results are realized, and the road may wind through uncertainty or even disorder. The spread of ideas can be slow, or absorption might be swift, as it was in Latin America during the 1970s. Throughout that decade, Glenn Smiley, who had been a tutor for Martin Luther King Jr, led huge workshops in Mexico and Colombia. He was joined by the formidable training couple of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr. The team had been sent to Latin America by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), in much the way that Bayard Rustin and Smiley had been dispatched to Montgomery, Alabama, a decade or so earlier. Smiley discerned the impact of King's example: 'The revolutionary successes of Dr King made him a Latin American hero who was in large part responsible for successful nonviolent projects in Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Argentina, and Brazil.'[7]

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, an academician named Adolfo Pérez Esquivel was in prison facing torture and probable execution as one of the leaders of Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, or Mothers of the Disappeared – a group that had come into being to protest the preventive detention and killings of those who had come to be known as *los desaparecidos*, the disappeared. Pérez Esquivel was also under lock and key for his role as a founder of Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ), the Latin American movement for peace and justice. It was from his prison cell that he learned that he was to receive the 1980 Nobel Prize for Peace. In a country where government violence and death squads had already taken the lives of between 10,000 and 30,000 persons, Pérez Esquivel might have become another statistic had he not received the international attention that accompanies receipt of

6. For a classification of 198 methods, see Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 2: *The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

7. Glenn Smiley, 'A Pebble Thrown into the Pond', *Fellowship,* Vol. 55 (June 1989), p. 9.

a Nobel prize.[8] Instead, the award to Pérez Esquivel brought international condemnation upon the Argentine Government.[9] In his remarks upon receiving this distinction, the sculptor-professor rejected any hope for a 'utopian social order' coming into being. Rather, he called for 'co-participation of those who govern and those governed', noting that SERPAJ rejected 'consensus achieved through violent force'.[10] The SERPAJ movement rapidly flowered in twenty-one countries of Latin America and continues to be an outspoken critic of military dictatorships. Its primary tools have been monitoring, investigation and denunciation – what might also be described as public disclosure.

In some situations, a movement's progress may be glacially delayed. It required most of the twentieth century for the African National Congress (ANC) to realize its goals. As has happened in other essentially nonviolent struggles, the ANC lost its nonviolent footing along the way, yet this did not occur until after fifty years of increasingly assertive, yet moderate, resistance against the system of racial apartheid. Founded in 1912, the ANC adhered to mass nonviolent action – using the techniques of general strikes, boycotts and demonstrations – until it was driven underground by the South African Government in 1960. On 21 March 1960, a nonviolent demonstration was led by a rival, more militant organization called the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). In Sharpeville, a segregated black township in Transvaal, 20,000 people turned out to participate. On that day, police killed sixty-nine persons; most were shot in the back. A huge outcry rose across the spectrum of anti-apartheid movements in response to the unprovoked killings of unarmed civilians.

The government retaliated against the popular outpouring of emotion and anger by cracking down even further on all efforts aimed against its apartheid policies. On 5 April 1960, it banned all activities of the ANC and other groups. At the same time, the authorities unleashed a new flood of brutally repressive measures. Lengthy incarcerations resulted, with major leaders of the anti-apartheid movement – from the PAC to the South African Communist Party and the ANC – either locked up, driven into exile or killed. It seemed as if the keys had truly been thrown away as the resisters were often subjected to brutal treatment and sent to remote penal colonies. The anti-apartheid movement had reached a watershed. The barbarism of the Sharpeville massacre and subsequent crushing of the nonviolent movement through the government's bans and prolonged imprisonments had collapsed

8. See James D. Rudolph (ed.), *Argentina: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Area Studies, The American University, 1986) (Area Handbook Series).
9. Ibid.; Amnesty International, *1981 Annual Report* (London: Amnesty International, 1982), p. 113.
10. 'Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speeches – Selections', *International Journal of Nonviolence*, Vol. 3 (1996–97), p. 201.

the ANC's options for resistance, and prolonged imprisonments left the anti-apartheid movement with no way to function legally. They could neither organize nor meet. The legal space in which to operate was closed.

Voices calling for armed struggle rose to the forefront. A roar resounded for violence to be met with violence, as 50,000 demonstrated in Bizana, the capital of Pondoland. Extreme repression by the regime against the so-called Pondo Rebellion resulted in the adoption of guerrilla tactics in Bizana. The winner of the 1960 Nobel Prize for Peace, Chief Albert Lithuli, an advocate for nonviolent methods, opposed any turn toward armed struggle; yet the ANC, of which he had been president, ultimately decided that it was time to initiate such a struggle since no alternative constitutional openings remained. The inability of anti-apartheid groups to operate openly and legally only strengthened the hand of those calling for armed struggle. From 1961 on, Pondo's manifestation of armed resistance reverberated. Exclusive adherence to nonviolent methods became a thing of the past. On 16 December 1961, the first planned attacks on South African Government installations occurred. This coincided with the appearance of Umkhonto we Sizwe, or Spear of the Nation, the armed wing of the ANC.[11]

ANC leader Nelson Mandela – released in 1990 from twenty-seven and a half years of imprisonment and elected president of the South African republic in 1994 – was a proponent of the shift away from the undiluted adherence to nonviolent strategies:

> At the beginning of June 1961 . . . I and some of my colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be wrong and unrealistic for African leaders to continue preaching peace and nonviolence at a time when the government met our demands with force. . . . For a long time the people had been talking of violence . . . and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and pursue peaceful methods.[12]

Mandela's personal perspective, however, had never changed about the necessity for avoiding a victor mentality:

> If you talk to whites, they think only whites exist and they look at the problems from the point of view of whites. . . . They forget also that blacks exist. But we have another problem. If you talk to blacks, coloreds and Indians, they make the same mistake. They think whites do not exist. They are triumphant. . . . Both tendencies are wrong.[13]

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11. Francis Meli, *A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to Us* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 145–7.
12. Ibid., pp. 146, 148.
13. Suzanne Daley, 'A New Charter Wins Adoption in South Africa', *New York Times*, 9 May 1996, p. A1.

Mandela has come to personify the spirit of *satyagraha*, with its capacity to differentiate the deed from the doer and avoid triumphalism.

In considering nonviolent movements, it must be acknowledged that the commitment to strategies that reject violence is not always simple, uniform or pure. This does not mean that a mixed experience – of which there are numerous examples – should be emulated; rather, it should be assessed for the insights it can offer.[14] The bitter aftermath of violence, the avoidance of which so dominated Gandhi's thinking, has been remarkably sidestepped in the new South Africa. The turn to armed struggle in the 1960s was reluctantly made under extreme provocation and, as a matter of policy, was restricted to strategic targets; violence against individuals was proscribed. Internal terror was not authorized, although when it did occur the ANC refused to condemn such incidents. Over its long chronology, the ANC traveled a full circle: from a half-century of nonviolent methods to armed struggle and thence, several decades later, to a negotiated settlement that allowed for a return to the fundamentally nonviolent ethos of the South African black populace. Toward the end of the South African struggle, international economic interventions, including a secondary boycott of corporations doing business with the apartheid regime, helped to speed the progression to negotiations. The republic's financiers, and its gold and diamond industries, relied on the import of capital and were thus sensitive to their standing in the international economic arena.

The basic inclination of the majority black population to think in terms of nonviolent power was ultimately able to reassert itself, and once the ANC was in negotiations with the government, the hand of forgiveness was offered to those who had administered the apartheid system. A key element in the talks was the difficult matter of how to reintegrate the armed guerrilla wings from the PAC and ANC into the regular South African defense force – an accomplishment of note. Vindictiveness, retribution and retaliation have been breathtakingly absent from the official discourse of the government that was freely elected by all the people in 1994. Throughout the long and convoluted history of South Africa's mass movement against apartheid, the resilience of the basic values of nonviolent struggle was never destroyed. In the end, violence did not win.

In contrast to the protracted chronology in South Africa, the people of the Philippines saw a quick return on their investment in nonviolent resistance. In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos assumed dictatorial powers. Among those rounded up was an elected official, Senator Benigno Aquino, the chief political rival of Marcos. After years in prison, Aquino became

14. See Principle 9, 'Maintain Nonviolent Discipline', in Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), pp. 42–5.

ill. In 1980, Marcos allowed him to go to the United States for a heart bypass operation. There he remained for three years of self-exile, speaking openly about returning home to lead a nonviolent struggle against the dictatorship. In prison, he had studied the Bible and Gandhi and made a profound conversion to nonviolence.[15] When he returned home – defying the warnings of the Philippine Government that he stay away – Aquino was assassinated, an act widely believed to have been carried out by operatives of the Marcos regime. Aquino's death galvanized the country in its opposition to the dictatorship and prepared the way for nonviolent struggle. Workshops on nonviolent resistance began in 1983 following the assassination.

While Aquino had been laying the political groundwork for a nonviolent revolution in the Philippines, Bishop Francisco Claver was spearheading parallel efforts in religious communities and the churches, preparing congregations to be receptive to the message that a peaceful transition was feasible. This was the news being broadcast by groups such as the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. Advocates from IFOR had been traveling and working in the Philippines for years and were invited back by leaders of the opposition movement, including the brother of the assassinated Aquino, and several religious communities. Tutors were dispatched, again the training team of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, along with Richard Deats, a long-time Fellowship of Reconciliation worker who had taught social ethics in the Philippines from 1959 to 1972. From Manila to Mindanao, they taught seminars on nonviolent direct action that are widely attributed with creating the foundation for coherent and successful Filipino civil resistance.[16] An IFOR affiliate was formed in the Philippines in July 1984, taking the name AKKAPKA, a word that means 'Action for Peace and Justice', and which as an acronym has the additional significance of 'I embrace you.' The group quickly became a clearinghouse for disseminating information while offering forty seminars in more than thirty provinces.[17]

The capacity for widespread nonviolent resistance was deeply interwoven with the predominant Roman Catholic religious faith of the people of the Philippines and the biblical call for peace.[18] From his diocese in Mindanao, Bishop Claver was one of the first voices to appeal for nonviolent resistance.[19] He had long been an outspoken advocate of

15. Hildegard Goss-Mayr, 'When Prayer and Revolution Became People Power', *Fellowship,* Vol. 53 (March 1987), p. 9.
16. Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 169.
17. Goss-Mayr, 'When Prayer and Revolution Became People Power', op. cit., p. 10.
18. Robert Shaplen, 'A Reporter at Large: From Marcos to Aquino', *New Yorker*, 25 August 1986, Part 1; ibid., 1 September 1986, Part 2; Jose C. Blanco, S.J., 'Revolutionary Thoughts, Preparation for Nonviolence', *Fellowship,* Vol. 53 (March 1987), p. 12.
19. Goss-Mayr, 'When Prayer and Revolution Became People Power', op. cit., p. 8.

nonviolence rooted in Christianity, continuously campaigning for the adoption of such techniques and principles. Claver expressed what he considered to be the imperative for resistance in a faith-centered society, such as in the Philippines, and defined its motivation:

> We choose nonviolence not merely as a strategy for the attaining of the needs of justice, casting it aside if it does not work. We choose it as an end in itself, or, more correctly, as part of the larger end of which justice itself is subordinate and prerequisite. . . . In short, we equate it with the very Gospel of Christ.[20]

Bishop Claver's exposition was reinforced when the Catholic bishops in the Philippines published a letter calling for 'the way of nonviolent struggle for justice'. A program of action was developed among both ecclesiastical and political leaders. Named the 'People's Victory Campaign' – because of the direct role the citizenry was expected to play in the transformation of the regime – the program outlined seven steps for nonviolent action.[21] 'We talk about corruption, we talk about violence, we talk about injustices,' said Bishop Claver. 'Who is going to correct all of that? The more we go into this whole problem of social reform, the more we see that it has to be the people.'[22]

By 1986, tensions had reached an all-time high, as a fraudulent election run by the Marcos government aroused the populace to pour into the streets. A moment of truth presented itself on 22 February, when two army generals and their troops defected. Religious leaders aired a plea to the Filipino people to give escort and defend the defecting soldiers. Radio Veritas, the Catholic station, broadcast passages from the speeches and writings of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and the Sermon on the Mount, and asked its listeners to follow these examples.[23]

The movement in the Philippines stands as an example of diffuse leadership, since almost every citizen was transformed into a leader. Hearing the call of religious leaders on the radio, 3 million men, women and children, including priests and nuns, stood outside the military installations of Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame for more than three days protecting groups of defecting soldiers and their families from advancing army tanks and troops. They did so with only their prayers and their presence.[24] Observing the nuns confronting armed soldiers, it was possible to see the way in which

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20. Richard Deats, 'One Year Later: The Nonviolent Revolution That Surprised the World', *Fellowship,* Vol. 53 (March 1987), p. 5.
21. Ibid.
22. Ilan Ziv, *People Power* (New York: First Run Icarus Films, 1989), 53 minutes.
23. Goss-Mayr, 'When Prayer and Revolution Became People Power', op. cit., p. 10.
24. Ibid., p. 11; Patricio R. Mamot, *People Power: Profile of Filipino Heroism* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1986), p. 33.

direct engagement with an oppressor through nonviolent struggle has the facility to search out and address the humanity in one's enemy.[25]

In a pronounced example of jiu-jitsu, large numbers of military personnel who were advancing against their defecting fellow military comrades found themselves emotionally moved to join the rebellious troops and the populace in resisting the government. Soldiers who had thought of themselves as protecting civilians found themselves safeguarded by unarmed citizens. Swiftly, in only seventy-seven hours, the repressive Marcos regime crumbled under the pressure of the nonviolent movement.[26] 'With no weapons but courage and determination and a very large portion of faith in God and themselves', one observer noted, 'a people freed itself from the domination and exploitation of a malevolent regime.'[27] This is not to say that there were no instances of retaliation in the Filipino movement but, instead, to suggest that the spirit of the encounter was more graphically demonstrated by the way in which people offered prayers for the safety of the fleeing President Marcos.[28] The result was a relatively peaceful revolution, won by the determination of a people who wanted a future of reconciliation, one as weaponless as possible, rather than a morrow of retribution and judgment.

Charismatic leadership is not required

The notion that a highly magnetic leader is a necessary prerequisite for a nonviolent success story needs to be reconsidered. The personal examples of the towering leadership of Gandhi and King should not be viewed as a rule of nonviolent struggle. Often, though not always, a movement finds it advantageous to project a single spokesperson. One reason for this is that the news media – so important to spreading the word or letting the movement know that outsiders are concerned about its mission – find it easier to attribute quotations to one figure. Although an individual can express the aspirations of a people, a single extraordinary leader may not necessarily emerge. When an entrancing leader does emerge – sometimes making an appearance on the world stage beyond the circumference of the local movement – it is often the result of an enigmatic and intricate process evolving over a period of years, such as happened with King. Movements often cast about, searching for the right person, or professionals may be involved in tapping the potential they find in an individual and building that person's resources. Although an enthralling leader may help catalyze a movement, more often it is the needs of the struggle that create the leader. In some situations, survival obliges the leadership to remain anonymous.

25. Deats, 'One Year Later', op. cit., p. 7.
26. Ibid., p. 6.
27. Virginia Baron, 'The Philippine Example', *Fellowship,* Vol. 53 (March 1987), p. 4.
28. Mamot, *People Power*, op. cit., p. 35.

Each movement will create its own leadership, whether a symbolic spokesperson, anonymous representatives, the presence of the multitude or myriad voices over decades.

Another incorrect notion is the idea that one must choose between either principled or tactical nonviolent direct action. It is a fallacy to think that the road forks, with one choice leading to a moral struggle on the high plain of ethics, the alternative dipping toward corruptible analysis and method, devoid of nobility of purpose and focused on the serviceable and concrete. Gene Sharp observed of this artificial dichotomy:

> Exploring the history and the potential of nonviolent struggle, one begins to realize that the 'ethical' and the 'practical' are essentially congruent. The nonviolent behavior espoused by the great religious teachers is ultimately that which works politically.[29]

The practical and the principled cannot be separated. Nonviolent struggle has the potential to uplift, lend dignity and empower its participants as they learn its truths and dynamics of power. Individuals discover their latent strengths by working with others who have similar grievances or visions. Nonviolent direct action is, thus, also extremely practical, because by changing themselves the participants alter their circumstances. Exceptional unity often develops among the ranks, and, particularly if discipline is maintained, heady reinforcement may be experienced when seeing results. As the proponents of nonviolent action improvise and innovate, they acquire still more self-confidence, and this allows them to hold even more firmly to their quest.

In most nonviolent struggles, there is also another tale to tell – a narrative of how the knowledge and insights employed were conveyed in the first place. Ideas have no borders, so they can be sped through the barriers of culture, language, religion, creed and ethnicity. Most often in the case of nonviolent struggle, concepts and theories travel by word of mouth. It is sometimes possible to discern a pattern. One individual may work systematically to interpret the demands of nonviolent struggle – which can seem inscrutable, inflexible or contrary if not well explained. Perhaps a cluster of persons may be involved in the process of interpretation. Wisdom from other settings is often imparted, making it clear that nonviolent struggle is infinitely adaptable: trainers may come from outside a movement or culture, bringing both theoretical and practical knowledge. Specific writings may be introduced to render thought into action. The translation of documents may be needed. Examples of peasant rebellions may be given, other sequences described or epics shared about folk who, through their own labors, threw off oppression. Portrayals may be made of those who

29. Gene Sharp, 'Nonviolent Struggle: An Effective Alternative', in Kenneth Kraft (ed.), *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 123.

have prevented invasion, lifted military occupation, broadened democracy, established respect for human rights or stood firm against repression. Symbols may be selected or have to be created. Physical places in the community may be designated as significant – particular schools, houses of worship, theaters or bookshops offering sanctuary for the discussion of ideas or protection from disruption. A special square, plaza or edifice of a prison may become emblematic. Workshops or lectures may be important germinal experiences, and these are often in and of themselves acts of noncooperation. Theoretical materials by academicians may be distributed that show nonviolent resistance in a broad historical context or encourage strategic thinking; and these chapters may seep through the intellectual community like a spring rain.

It can take decades for agents of transmission to come to light. The life of Martin Luther King Jr has been among the most extensively chronicled in twentieth-century biography. Yet it is only now that those who served as the tutors for his militant nonviolence are emerging as influences in their own right. Often to be found is a Bayard Rustin, Glenn E. Smiley or James M. Lawson Jr. Illuminating examples of nonviolent resistance abound in numbers greater than can be recorded in a volume light enough to hold in one's hands. This does not mean that other instances, if omitted, are less significant or revealing. The examples chosen here are indicative of the universality of nonviolent struggle, without effacing the distinctions that make each labor different. The following accounts suggest the variety of individuals and groups who have introduced ideas, run workshops, published materials, protected meeting places, translated documents or otherwise transmitted concepts and techniques. All of the movements considered transcend their leaders. That is what makes them movements.

The nonviolent struggle in Burma

We will produce the form of government that the people want.
Aung San Suu Kyi[30]

A father's legacy

Buddhism, one of two reforming offshoots of Hinduism in the sixth century B.C. – the other being Jainism – spread over the whole of India and east to Burma, Thailand, Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia. Although it was eclipsed in India, Buddhism, or Dharma, took firm root elsewhere in Asia. The story and example of Buddha, born Siddhartha Gautama in 563 B.C., inspires millions who have sought to follow his 'middle way'. To Buddha, extreme

30. Philip Shenon, 'Freed Burmese Democrat Is Conciliatory', *New York Times*, 12 July 1995.

asceticism made no more sense than rampant sexuality. The state of enlightenment he encouraged is neither a life of degrading lusts nor an existence of mortification.[31] Practicing Buddhists promise not to harm or destroy living beings. Inherent in this pledge is the Buddhist concept of nonviolence, also present in Jainism, which includes a daily pledge to act in a kindly way. This commitment includes conscious efforts to erase hatred from one's life as well as to strive for patience.[32]

The Burmese have followed Buddhism for centuries. In the oldest of the Buddhist manuscripts can be found the text of Gautama's Sermon of the Four Noble Truths. In it, Buddha presents a religious code, the 'middle path', and identifies eight elements on the path that can liberate human beings from internal suffering and lead to *nirvana*: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The middle path offers compromise – neither a conservative nor liberal approach to the 'Eightfold Path' – a middle ground for avoiding the extremes of loose conduct or severe asceticism.

While the Buddhist ethos of Burma may be nonviolent at its core, that does not mean that Burma's history is lacking in periods of extraordinary violence. During the eleventh century, King Anawratha consolidated a group of small states into a monarchy in which rulers held absolute powers of life and death. In the twentieth century, British-ruled Burma was described by George Orwell – in words that seem to come out of a contemporary human rights monitoring report – as 'stifling', a place in which every word and thought was censored and free speech was unthinkable. Burma was colonized by Britain in stages, beginning in 1824, with complete annexation to the Commonwealth taking place in 1886. Under colonial rule, it was governed as a province of British India, and the country's wealth poured into the coffers of London, as the people of Burma watched Indians being imported for jobs the Burmese were willing and able to do. The British allowed traditional Burmese provincial rulers to remain in power, which resulted in little contact between the imperial rulers and their subjects. The colonial occupation was met with resistance almost immediately from nationalist students in Rangoon and Buddhist monks. In 1937, the British decided to administer Burma separately from India, and a new constitution was put into place that allowed for greater participation by the Burmese in deciding the direction of their country.

The Second World War marked a turning point as Burmese nationalists refused to aid British war efforts unless they received a promise

31. See John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), Chaps. 5 and 6.

32. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Non-Violence', in *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* (Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, 1994), p. 105.

of independence in return for their support. Young activists, dreaming of a free Burma, traveled to China and Japan in search of resources and training. They returned as the Thirty Comrades, ready to form an independence army. Among the Thirty Comrades was Aung San, the magnetic commander of the army whose family had been in opposition to British rule since annexation of the country in 1886. Aung San and the other nationalists had returned to Burma with Japanese troops, who were to help them gain independence. Having first been against the British and then wooed by the Japanese, he subsequently switched his allegiance back to the Allies prior to leading the push for independence, when he realized that the Japanese would not want to relinquish control of Burma. His fears were justified. His daughter Aung San Suu Kyi would later say 'the country had simply exchanged one foreign ruler for another'.[33]

Aung San and his fellow nationalists formed the underground Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), and he was astutely able to use the unity of the league to obtain a position on Burma's Executive Council in 1946; Aung San had essentially become the nation's prime minister, although the office was still subject to British rule. From his newfound position, he hammered out an agreement in London, with British prime minister Clement Atlee, that provided for Burmese independence by 1948. Subsequently, Aung San's party won a majority of seats in the elections that were held for a constitutional assembly. The British were successfully removed from Burmese soil by 1947, but, although Burma was declared free, the nature of its freedom was elusive. Aung San would have become the country's first elected prime minister had he and his cabinet not been gunned down in that same year by agents of his principal rival. Martyred at thirty-two years of age, he left behind a widow and three children, among them a two-year-old daughter.

Aung San also left behind an emerging nation in need of able guidance. The years following the tragic loss of Aung San were times of chaos, insurrection, communist insurgency, official corruption and political chicanery. Without a figure of Aung San's vision and stature, following a military coup d'état Burma fell into the hands of General Ne Win. His fearful and incompetent rule continued for the better part of half a century. The xenophobic regime systematically cultivated in the populace an alarm about outsiders and foreigners, intensifying the very isolation that allowed it to function unchecked. In 1962, Ne Win's totalitarian despotism led him to suspend the constitution and establish a one-party system. He banned all independent Burmese newspapers and ruled capriciously in the decades following, sometimes relying on astrology, numerology and fortune-tellers

33. Aung San Suu Kyi, 'My Country and People', in Michael Aris (ed.), *Freedom from Fear* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 54.

Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize for Peace, outside her family home in Rangoon (Yangon), December 1995.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/ Burma Project USA)

Suu Kyi's weekend speeches at the gate to her family compound have become the only forum for free speech in Burma (Myanmar). Throughout the week, people drop questions into her letter box; during her talks, she reads the questions aloud and answers them.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

Listeners record Suu Kyi's words onto cassettes which, copied and recopied, have become the primary means of communication for the prodemocracy movement.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

From within her compound can be seen the improvised platform on which Suu Kyi stands to speak. Military intelligence units, on her property 24 hours a day, monitor everything she does.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

Suu Kyi addressing a February 1996 Saturday gathering, her unarmed security guards standing directly below her. These speeches, given even while under house arrest, on occasion drew as many as 10,000 people.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

National League of Democracy executive committee members and Suu Kyi, February 1996.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

Suu Kyi in the meeting room of her home in front of a wall poster of her father, Aung San.
(Photo: Leslie Kean/Burma Project USA)

to influence the nation's policy. In 1987, Ne Win abolished 60 percent of the country's currency by invalidating large-denomination bank notes and replacing them, instead, with his 'lucky numbers' – 45 and 90. In a move to curb inflation by slashing at the enormous black market, thousands saw their meager savings utterly wiped out as their old 25-, 35-, and 75-kyat bank notes no longer held any value. This eccentric action, which wreaked havoc and pauperized so many people, resulted in the first significant anti-government demonstrations in more than a decade. The turmoil lasted for months and would explode in August 1988.[34]

Ne Win's base of power was the military – approximately 200,000 soldiers, mainly infantry, and, in the absence of civil society, the principal route for upward mobility. With steep unemployment, there was no shortage of eager volunteers ready to enlist. Officers were able to become rich by regional standards and get cheap vehicles, land, whisky and cigarettes to compensate for low salaries.[35] Having once been the rice basket of the region, exporting food to neighboring countries, Burma became the poorest nation in South-East Asia. By the late 1980s, it was frequently listed as one of the ten poorest nations in the world, and 80 percent of Burma's populace of approximately 42 million people existed in deep poverty.

Aung San Suu Kyi returns home

Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, spent her girlhood in Burma, and in 1960, at the age of fifteen, went with her mother Khin Kyi to India, where the latter had been appointed ambassador – the first woman ever to serve as head of a Burmese diplomatic mission. In India, Suu Kyi spent one year as a student in New Delhi before she left for Britain to continue her studies. During her stay in India, she became familiar with the campaigns and writings of Gandhi and obtained insights that she would bring into play years later. In 1967, she earned a bachelor's degree at St Hugh's College, Oxford University, where she had read politics, philosophy and economics. Two years after leaving Oxford, she went to New York, where she worked with the United Nations Secretariat. While in New York, she served as a volunteer at Bellevue Hospital for several hours each week.[36] Half a world away from her birthplace, she had grown into adulthood, begun her career, and met the man she would marry.

Suu Kyi wed a British scholar and specialist on Tibet named Michael Aris in 1972. Together, they moved to the small kingdom of Bhutan, in the Himalaya Mountains, where she was employed by the Bhutan Foreign

34. Daniel Benjamin, 'Burma: A Country under the Boot', *Time*, 21 August 1989, p. 36.
35. Bertil Lintner, 'Burma – The Army's Role in Politics', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 October 1989, p. 715.
36. 'Aung San Suu Kyi', in Judith Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1992* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1992), p. 28.

Ministry as a research officer on UN affairs, while her husband worked as a tutor to the royal family and as a government translator. They returned to the United Kingdom in 1973 for the birth of their first son, and, four years later, a second boy was born to the couple.

'Some would say she became obsessed with the image of the father she never knew,' Michael Aris wrote.[37] She had begun research for a biographical essay on her father, which appeared in 1984. Having taken up the Japanese language, she ventured on her own to the University of Kyoto, where she was a visiting scholar in 1985 and 1986. There she continued the work on her father's life. Suu Kyi wrote:

> It was only when I grew older and started collecting material on his life and achievements that I began to learn what he had really been like and how much he had managed to achieve in his thirty-two years. Not only did I then conceive an admiration for him as a patriot and statesman but I developed a strong sense of empathy as I discovered many similarities in our attitudes. It is perhaps because of this strong bond that I came to feel such a deep sense of responsibility for the welfare of my country.[38]

In 1986, Suu Kyi met with her husband in Simla, India, where she carried out scholarly research on life under colonialism in Burma and India. Upon returning to Britain the following year, she began work on a doctorate in Burmese literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University.

At the time of her marriage, Suu Kyi had asked her future husband to agree that 'if there was ever a time I had to go back to my country, he would not stand in my way'.[39] That moment for which she had prepared herself and her husband arrived when Suu Kyi's mother became seriously ill in late March 1988. The dutiful daughter took the next flight from London to Rangoon to care for her mother during her final days. Upon her arrival in Burma, she found nothing like the homeland for which she had yearned during her years away, nor was it the nation her father had envisioned when he had fought and lost his life. Armed soldiers patrolled the avenues, as university students demonstrated against the government in the tense, dilapidated capital city.

The principles so eloquently championed by Aung San had been discarded during the years of misrule by Ne Win. The general never kept his repeated promises to step down, and the country's power structure remained in the hands of the accessories to his villainies. Claiming that he

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37. Introduction, in Michael Aris (ed.), *Freedom from Fear,* op. cit., p. xvi.
38. Aung San Suu Kyi, 'In the Eye of the Revolution', in Michael Aris (ed.), *Freedom from Fear*, op. cit., p. 211.
39. Steven Erlanger, 'Rangoon Journal: A Daughter of Burma, But Can She Be a Symbol?' *New York Times*, 11 January 1989, p. A4.

was retiring in 1981, and again in 1988, Ne Win actually tightened his control. His secret police kept his forces under surveillance, and he maintained files on his subordinates.[40] Never once did he loosen his grim hold on the reins of the country.

Student protests occurred episodically throughout late 1987, and, as Suu Kyi returned in March 1988, a student incident provoked street demonstrations and confrontations with police and the army. Students in schools and universities had been powerless for years to prevent the routine closing by the military authorities of institutions of learning, for the slightest provocation. They instead now enrolled in the struggle for democracy. Suu Kyi harkened back to her father's era when she called this period Burma's 'second struggle for national independence'.[41] During five days, mass demonstrations drew 15,000 students, who were joined as well by townspeople. Those killed numbered 200, among them forty-one acknowledged to have been suffocated in a police van.[42] As many as 3,000 unarmed protesters were shot by Burmese army units.[43]

Suu Kyi's disheartenment had the effect of fueling her passion, and amplified her courage to carry on in her father's steps. Fulfilling long-standing promises that she had made to herself, she joined the voices calling for reform in Burma. In late July 1988, the populace learned that Ne Win had appointed General Sein Lwin to stand in for him; Sein Lwin was considered among the most reactionary of the sycophants surrounding Ne Win, who remained fundamentally in control. In protest, Buddhist monks, nurses, students, professors and children took to the streets in the tens of thousands in Rangoon and elsewhere in the country.

Beginning with the eighth day of the eighth month of 1988 – an unforgettable numerical coincidence – a six-week 'spontaneous nationwide revolt' occurred, with unarmed people's committees of teachers, students and monks facing the army's bullets to try to wrest control from Ne Win's apparatus.[44] The 1988 upheaval had been prompted by widespread torture, alleged slavery, forced relocation of populations, gross censorship, destruction of the educational system, exile, refugees and attacks on the Buddhist clergy. Protesters were annihilated *en masse*. Diplomats told reporters that local physicians in Rangoon believed that more than 3,000 people had been

40. Lintner, 'Burma – The Army's Role in Politics', op. cit., p. 715.
41. Aung San Suu Kyi, 'Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda', in Michael Aris (ed.), *Freedom from Fear*, op. cit., pp. 198–204, delivered 26 August 1988.
42. Philip Kreager, 'Aung San Suu Kyi and the Peaceful Struggle for Human Rights in Burma', in Michael Aris (ed.), *Freedom from Fear*, op. cit., p. 297.
43. Lintner, 'Burma – The Army's Role in Politics', op. cit., p. 715; 'Woman against an Army', *The Times* (London), 15 October 1991.
44. Martin Smith, 'The Revolution That Was Killed by Deceit', *The Times* (London), 8 August 1989.

killed by police opening fire on crowds of unarmed civilians.[45] Suu Kyi could not be a bystander at her mother's home. 'As my father's daughter, I felt I had a duty to get involved,' she said.[46]

Sein Lwin resigned on 12 August, and was replaced by Maung Maung, who appeared more moderate; he ordered the soldiers to their barracks even as he released 5,000 prisoners from their cells. With the deterioration of civilian authority, the former inmates proceeded to ransack shops and steal food. The suspicion remains that the real intent of Maung's action was to stimulate anarchy justifying the reimposition of military rule and that he emptied the jails to make way for new political prisoners from the prodemocracy movement. By fits and starts, the government had endeavored to make itself appear to be liberalizing, but this was a ruse to mask the hardening of its position. Meanwhile, Ne Win retained full control of the government as Maung Maung's puppeteer.

Suu Kyi's first public presentation was made on 26 August 1988 before a crowd of half a million listeners at the immense multi-tiered and gold-gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, the most sacred of Burma's innumerable shrines (said to have been built 2,500 years ago). She provided a point of focus for popular disenchantment by directing the fury of the people toward democratic reclaim through coherent nonviolence. The sincerity of her convictions and the memories of her father dazzled the crowds that hoped she would carry on his struggle. Beginning at that moment, Suu Kyi would rapidly gain attention as the most effective leader of the broad, popular movement to end Burma's military dictatorship and establish democracy and human rights. Perhaps most telling was the way in which she held high regard for the military in one hand, while bidding for rights and democracy with the other. She was able to straddle both the civil and military spheres of society because of her own personal history, speaking of her attachment to the military and how soldiers had cared for her as a child. Often alluding to her father's role in creating the modern Burmese army, she recalled his warnings against tyranny by the military and his fears of the armed forces splitting into factions and imperiling the transition he envisioned. Notwithstanding her efforts to maintain a bridge of mutual respect with the military, she was apparently regarded as a supreme threat by the armed forces. At that time, within the military, it was a possibility that resistance would develop against the government; just as the populace was able to overcome its fear of the government and its enforcers, soldiers charged with implementing the violent suppression of their own people were capable of showing disrespect toward their superiors. An officer in the

45. Nicholas Cumming-Bruce, 'Burmese Hero's Daughter Puts Democracy Plan', *Guardian* (London), 18 August 1988.

46. Erlanger, 'Rangoon Journal: A Daughter of Burma, But Can She Be a Symbol?' op. cit., p. A4.

army had observed, 'The officers are still watching each other, waiting for someone to take the first step. Then, the landslide will come, as it did among the civilians.'[47]

A thousand speeches, a thousand acts of civil disobedience

The upheaval and other calamitous circumstances of 1988 only served to recall the deficit in Burma left by Suu Kyi's father's death. The nation was in turmoil. On 18 September 1988, a junta of nineteen officers calling themselves the State Law and Order Restoration Council, better known as SLORC, took control of the beggared nation. General Saw Maung announced what turned out to be a fake coup d'état – one backed by Ne Win – identifying himself as the prime minister and minister of both foreign affairs and defense.[48] Political meetings of more than four participants were banned – despite the absurdity of a Bill that also provided for political parties and pledged free elections – while SLORC retained its authority to arrest and sentence citizens without trial. The new law meant that when thousands appeared in the streets to protest, they were in flagrant violation of the new statutes. A thousand people were reported to have been killed when soldiers fired into crowds of civilians, on the day of the so-called coup.[49]

Violence is sometimes found on the fringes of nonviolent movements, as was the case in Burma. 'Although protests started peacefully', wrote one observer, 'the participants, when confronted by police or troops, turned to violence: stones, poison darts, even beheadings.'[50] The use of violence is nearly always a hindrance to a struggle, weakening its impact. There will always be those, however, who, without adequate preparation or training, misconstrue it as evidence of strength. Also, the sheer scale of a movement can result in poor communications, inducing a collapse of discipline. Groups sometimes try to 'help' the nonviolent resisters without realizing that they are hurting the strategic power of those they are trying to aid. Without sufficient planning, spirits can break as a result of the extreme cruelty of repression. Preparedness to face such cruelty is essential in nonviolent direct action, and time is required to enable everyone to learn how a movement's potency is vitiated by retaliation. The wonder, in Burma's case, is that there were not more breakdowns.

On 24 September 1988, Suu Kyi became one of the founders of the National League of Democracy (NLD), as well as its general secretary. Propounding the 'middle path' of nonviolent struggle and echoing her father's

47. Lintner, 'Burma – The Army's Role in Politics', op. cit., p. 715.
48. Eric Kolvig, *Burma Today: Land of Hope and Terror* (Washington, D.C.: International Burma Campaign, 1991), p. 16.
49. Erlanger, 'Rangoon Journal: A Daughter of Burma, But Can She Be a Symbol?', op. cit., p. A4.
50. Kreager, 'Aung San Suu Kyi', op. cit., p. 298.

policies, she also insisted on advocating for the rights of the ethnic non-Burmese nationalities in the country as well as the Burmese. She called for a new constitution to be drafted with the participation of every political element – one that would take into account the desires of all the people.[51]

Suu Kyi spoke out firmly but nonviolently against the travesty of the hundreds of student deaths. It is her conviction that all the world's great religious faiths were dedicated to the creation of 'happiness and harmony'; she believes that the 'spiritual aspiration for mutual understanding and peace' is the counterweight to the instincts of combativeness and competitiveness that are also found in the human race.[52] She traveled to more than fifty towns to voice her objections to the military regime. Peasants threw garlands of jasmine blossoms around her neck and chanted 'Long live Aung San Suu Kyi'. Of course, the utterance of any refrain meant possible arrest for violating some law. Because of the new SLORC decrees, her speeches had become acts of civil disobedience, her crusade reminiscent of Gandhi's campaigns. Her motives were clearly not those of a politician: 'A life in politics holds no attraction for me,' she said. 'I serve as a kind of unifying force because of my father's name and because I am not interested in jostling for any kind of position.'[53]

Nothing could halt the gathering storm of the nation's fury. Buddhist monks – with their saffron robes, shaved heads and position of prestige in Burmese society – joined the students in growing numbers. As the country moved toward its first multiparty elections in thirty years, Suu Kyi continued to tour the country giving speeches. During her years abroad, she had always worn Burmese national dress and spoken her mother tongue; nonetheless, she was criticized for having married a foreigner and living overseas for much of her life. She was indignant at such aspersions. 'These facts', she declared, 'have never interfered and will never interfere with or lessen my love and devotion for my country by any measure or degree.'[54]

In less than one year, between August 1988 and July 1989, Suu Kyi gave a thousand speeches, sometimes traveling by bullock cart, small boat or bicycle. By August 1989, the nonviolent prodemocracy movement had grown to 2 million dues-paying members out of a population of 40 million.[55]

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51. 'Woman against an Army', op. cit.; Smith, 'The Revolution That Was Killed by Deceit', op. cit.
52. Aung San Suu Kyi, 'Opening Keynote Address', *Burma Debate*, Vol. 2, No. 4, August/September 1995, p. 19, address at NGO Forum on Women, Beijing, 1995.
53. Karan Thapar, 'People's Heroine Spells Out Objectives', *The Times* (London), 29 August 1988.
54. Suu Kyi, 'Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda', op. cit., pp. 198–204.
55. Benjamin, 'Burma: A Country under the Boot', op. cit., p. 36.

Videotapes, cassettes and buttons

Suu Kyi's potent ideas about nonviolent struggle, justice, democracy, nationalism and human rights were spread by a video camera that was carried without much notice by an assistant. After videotaping her addresses, the videotapes were copied and recopied; Suu Kyi's speeches were distributed clandestinely into the most isolated sections of the country. Used to reduce the expenses incurred by the movement, the technology of Japanese-built videos served a function that the engineers who had designed them could not have imagined: they were 'ready-made to undermine the political monopoly of an authoritarian regime', and many persons were willing to pay three or four days' wages to buy one of the banned tapes.[56] Thousands consistently defied the ban on the assembly of more than four persons in order to hear Suu Kyi speak, a tiger orchid tucked in her hair. Next to loudspeakers, dozens of Burmese could be seen holding voice recorders and taping every word on cassettes that would multiply in number as they, too, were reproduced, the only other medium through which her message could be communicated. 'Word spreads', commented a chemist, 'from mouth to mouth.'[57] At rallies, buttons were passed out showing a photograph of her father with the tiny visage of his daughter perched on his shoulder.[58] Suu Kyi's smile, features, clear gaze, directness and presence reminded people of her father. Her temerity, bearing and oratorical gifts attracted a following.

For a time, the army conspicuously left her alone. Suu Kyi's association with her father carried the implication of history repeating itself – another martyrdom would be unforgivable. After several months, however, the government stopped looking the other way and began an effort to discredit her in late 1988, including casting aspersions on her morals. On 21 January 1989, she wrote her husband and described the type of interference that she and her associates were experiencing, this time at a rally in the Irrawaddy River Delta a short while before:

> All the way the people . . . had been told not to go out of their houses, not to wave, etc., and gunshots had been fired to frighten them. In spite of that there were enough crowds and enthusiasm to displease [Brigadier] Myint Aung, who kept issuing more repressive orders. Yesterday we sailed [into the town of] Bassein accompanied by two boatloads of armed marines and the whole harbor was full of troops, most of the streets blocked, sandbagged and barbwired, hundreds of soldiers posted all over the town. Also they arrested a number of our men.[59]

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56. Clayton Jones, 'Burmese Politician Woos the Masses', *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 June 1989, p. 3.
57. Seth Mydans, 'Burma Taking a Firmer Line: Critics' Window of Freedom Seems to Be Swinging Shut', *International Herald Tribune*, 3 September 1996, p. 1.
58. Ibid.
59. 'Aung San Suu Kyi', in Judith Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1992*, op. cit., p. 30.

On 5 April 1989, Suu Kyi was nearly gunned down by six soldiers who were under orders to kill her. Deliberately, she asked her colleagues to stand back as she walked straight into the line of fire, gazing steadily at the six marksmen. Finally, a ranking officer countermanded the order.[60]

Suu Kyi had let it be known that she doubted that SLORC would let the promised elections proceed. In June, she boldly appealed to members of the armed forces and SLORC to examine their fealties and overthrow Ne Win: 'I call you all to be loyal to the state. Be loyal to the people. You don't have to be loyal to Ne Win.'[61] A month later, she charged that the junta, which had issued orders for the summary execution of political prisoners, had revealed its true colors: 'The military government's declaration of martial law clearly shows that our country is now subject to fascism. . . . To achieve democracy, the struggle against fascism must be continued with courage.'[62] In early summer 1989, Suu Kyi spoke to an estimated crowd of 30,000 near Rangoon's Sule Pagoda, and vowed that her party would continue its campaign of civil disobedience against unjust laws:

> What I mean by defying authority is non-acceptance of unlawful orders meant to suppress the people. At the moment our civil disobedience consists in putting out as many pamphlets as possible in defiance of the SLORC. There's nothing violent about it. It's no more violent than is necessary in banging the keys of a typewriter.[63]

'Truth will come one day'

The military government, on 20 July 1989, arrested forty-two key leaders of the National League of Democracy and placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. An additional 2,000 party activists were also detained. When Suu Kyi was advised that SLORC had ordered her restrained, she turned to the men who had informed her and said, 'I do not hold this against you.' Bringing a pitcher of water and drinking glasses, she poured drinks for perhaps thirty friends and supporters who had gathered at her home for her impending arrest, yet her chief concern seemed to be to comfort them. One supporter recalls, 'At 10 o'clock that night we were sent to the Insein jail. Daw [Aung San] Suu [Kyi] accompanied us to the car. Her last words to us were those of encouragement . . . "Truth will come one day."'[64] Forced to remain within her family compound, eleven truckloads of troops were stationed outside her house and forced her back inside when she tried to visit a mausoleum.

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60. Ibid., p. 31.
61. Benjamin, 'Burma: A Country under the Boot', op. cit., pp. 36–7.
62. 'Aung San Suu Kyi', in Judith Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1992*, op. cit., p. 31.
63. Kreager, 'Aung San Suu Kyi', op. cit., p. 314.
64. '"Truth Will Come One Day"', *Burma Debate*, Vol. 2, No. 4, August/September 1995, p. 11.

As Suu Kyi was maturing in her understanding of peace, politics, and, perhaps most importantly, in her understanding of what the people of Burma wanted in their future, she early realized that it was the most basic of human yearnings inspiring people to speak out that were at the root of a peaceable resolution. The words *tolerance, dignity, freedom* and *security* came to hold particular significance for Suu Kyi. She realized that there could be no peace without human security and that such security is not based in weaponry, but is concerned with life and dignity. The actions she took and the words she spoke reflected her understanding that the people of Burma were searching for freedom from fear and want of basic necessities. Suu Kyi emphasized the need for tolerance. Her predisposition to Gandhian strategies was evident in her emphasis on keeping open the channels of communication with SLORC and her bid for all parties involved to 'meet new challenges without resorting to intransigence or violence'.[65]

In May 1990, elections were allowed to proceed, although pre-election international monitors observed gross breaches of electoral procedures as the government retained clamps on the media, public assembly and public speech. At the time of the balloting, more than 400 members of the NLD were in prison, its leader sequestered under house arrest. Not surprisingly 82 percent of the ballots cast went for candidates of the NLD. Having permitted the elections, and having declared them free and fair, SLORC refused to let the 392 elected parliamentarians take their rightful seats out of the 485 seats that were contested.[66]

The monks' boycott

Suu Kyi's inspiration has led to innovative actions. Perhaps the best example of nonviolent ingenuity was the monks' boycott. Following an incident in August 1990 in which two monks were killed and two lay persons injured, a group of Buddhist monks decided to apply their own distinct nonviolent sanctions. In Mandalay, the monks took the most serious steps that members of the clergy could take when they decided to boycott all dealings with Burmese military officials and their families. Refusing even the interaction of accepting alms from them, they also declined to officiate at weddings or funerals. This 'excommunication' had dire implications, putting the sincere believer in a grave predicament in the present life. By preventing their ability to attain spiritual worthiness, the monks were helping guarantee a painful rebirth in the next. The monks declared the government and military to be an abomination. Religious military families were visibly affected by this rejection. The boycott spread from Mandalay, south to Rangoon and out

65. Suu Kyi, 'Opening Keynote Address', op. cit., p. 17.
66. 'Burmese Activists Plan to Meet Despite Arrests', *New York Times*, 24 May 1996.

to other parts of Burma before it was crushed by a brutal military clampdown.[67]

Despite the imaginative and daring resistance of the ongoing nonviolent movement, some interested observers claim that the prodemocracy league has been splintered and unable to develop a plausible programmatic alternative to the Burmese Government. For all its egregious faults, they say, the country's economy has started to improve. Sympathetic critics contend that the movement has failed to mobilize support beyond limited purist constituencies that are chiefly concerned about human rights. The internal divisions, fragmentation and fatigue to be found in any movement, they argue, have kept Suu Kyi's mobilization politically ineffectual. In an effort to preserve their fragile coalition, for example, no definitive position has been taken on heroin trafficking, which has become central to the country's economy.

What then has terrified the military dictators about a diminutive intellectual, a community of monks and student activists? Suu Kyi's frequent citing of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr has invoked a form of power that they – with all their military equipment, coercion and repression – could neither purchase nor possess. Even in Burma, immured against the world, Suu Kyi's words conjure up nonviolent tools against which military machines lose power. Justifiably, the unelected dictators would be fearful at her invocation of such potent images.

The world community stood as witness to the courage and conviction of Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma when she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1991. The Nobel committee, accepting the nomination made by Václav Havel, stressed the significance of Suu Kyi's efforts in forging a nonviolent movement based on reconciliation. 'She became the leader of a democratic opposition which employs nonviolent means to resist a regime characterized by brutality,' the official announcement read. 'Suu Kyi's struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades.'[68]

Despite a hunger strike by Suu Kyi in 1992, and the proclamation of eight former Nobel Peace Prize winners who gathered in Bangkok in 1993 to press for her release, the regime remained unmoved. Her supporters sometimes feared that the already slender woman was starving to death.[69] A 1994 visit by US congressman Bill Richardson, the first outsider allowed to see her, was widely credited with her release in July 1995, six years after her house arrest. 'I have always felt free', she told the British Broadcasting

67. Kolvig, *Burma Today*, op. cit., p. 46.
68. Craig R. Whitney, 'Burmese Opposition Leader Wins the Nobel Peace Prize', *New York Times*, 15 October 1991, p. A10.
69. 'The World Needs No More Martyrs', *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 December 1992, p. 2B, editorial.

Corporation, 'because they have not been able to do anything to what really matters – to my mind, my principles, what I believe in. They were not able to touch that. So I am free.'[70] She cautioned, 'People have to accept that we are nowhere near democracy yet. . . . The situation hasn't changed.'[71] Throughout most of 1996, even as harsher laws were written and rewritten, with prison penalties of up to twenty years decreed for anyone who acts to undermine the stability of the state, thousands defied the government's ban on assembly to hear her speak:

> We will produce the form of government that the people want. . . . But at the same time, we must not be reckless. We will surely get to our destination if we join hands. We will not bear grudges against anybody else. We have to try to understand each other.[72]

She warned her listeners to be cautious and not to break off contact with the opposition: 'I have always believed that the future stability and happiness of our nation depends entirely on the readiness of all parties to work for reconciliation.'[73] Suu Kyi has made it a central tenet to find common ground with those who have abused the people's trust: 'In the end our problems will have to be settled through dialogue,'[74] she said, reminding the crowds of the need to employ the spirit of Gandhi and King's avoidance of triumphalism and their emphasis on persuasion. Every weekend, as many as 10,000 people gathered in front of her home, her prison. In addition to students and Buddhist monks, the elderly came, along with cheroot-smoking laborers, mothers and grandmothers, shopkeepers, physicians and business owners. They braved monsoons and winds to hear one of the world's most forceful and irresistible individuals debate the generals, their unelected government and proposals for a new constitution. As she rose to stand on a platform behind the gate of her family compound and look out on rapt throngs, hundreds of tape recorders clicked on to record the words of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose name means 'A Bright Collection of Strange Victories'.[75]

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70. BBC interview/ABC Nightline, 13 July 1995, quoted in 'In Her Own Words: Aung San Suu Kyi Speaks to the World', *Burma Debate*, Vol. 2, No. 4, August/September 1995, p. 13.
71. *Financial Times*, 15–16 July 1995, quoted in 'In Her Own Words: Aung San Suu Kyi Speaks to the World', op. cit., p. 12.
72. 'Defying New Law, Burmese Dissident Speaks to Supporters', *New York Times*, 9 June 1996.
73. Shenon, 'Freed Burmese Democrat Is Conciliatory', *New York Times*, op. cit.
74. *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 September 1995, quoted in 'In Her Own Words: Aung San Suu Kyi Speaks to the World', op. cit., p. 15.
75. 'Aung San Suu Kyi', in Judith Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1992*, p. 31. On 4 December 1996, Burma's military dictatorship again restricted Suu Kyi to her home, in a move that she termed 'virtual house arrest' and was likely to be repeated again. Vithoon Amorn, 'Burma's Junta Confines Its Leading Opponent', *Washington Post*, 5 December 1996, p. A44.

The Polish fight for freedom

We have already tried and tested every form of violence, and not once in the entire course of human history has anything good or lasting come from it.
Lech Walesa[76]

Workers unite with the 'underground church'

For the oppressed, the fight for freedom is often lost in the daily struggle to survive. Not so for the people of Poland. Though the Poles have experienced repeated injustice during the twentieth century, it is possible to look back and see that they never stopped believing in their hope for a free and democratic government. Their confidence was bolstered by a rich history of striving for liberty, beginning with the Polish constitution of 1791, which is famous as one of the world's first to promote democratic ideals.

In the autumn of 1939, the brutal force of Nazism fell on Poland. More than 6 million Poles lost their lives fighting for their homeland during the Second World War or were killed in Nazi death camps, including 3 million of the nation's 3.5 million Jews.[77] While a vision of freedom remained in their minds, the Poles had first to make their escape from authoritarianism. Although the initial reaction was one of great relief when the Soviets 'rescued' Poland from the Nazis, this response was short-lived, as life under post-Second World War communist rule proved to be extremely difficult and freedoms were systematically suppressed.[78]

In an environment of frustration and despair, Polish nonviolent resistance was born. After the war, workers had hoped for and expected higher wages and better working conditions. The predominantly Roman Catholic population yearned for religious freedom and the liberty that would allow free expression of their spiritual values.

In June 1956, the people of Poznan rebelled against communist rule with strikes and demonstrations that demanded both 'bread and freedom'. Although the revolt was quickly extinguished by government troops using brute force and killings, the uprising nonetheless resulted in a change in government leadership to one which promised reforms. By the autumn of 1956, the population was filled with hope during a period known as October Springtime, the name suggesting a feeling of euphoria. It did not last long. The government quickly forgot about its vowed improvements, and life went back to chronic food shortages and low wages.[79]

When the Czech rebellion known as the Prague Spring began in

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76. Caroline Lazo, *Lech Walesa* (New York: Dillon Press, 1993), p. 11.
77. Laura Blumenfeld, 'The War Ended: Hate Did Not', *Washington Post*, 8 July 1996.
78. Lazo, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 13.
79. Mary Craig, *Lech Walesa: The Leader of Solidarity and Campaigner for Freedom and Human Rights in Poland* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gareth Stevens, 1990), p. 11.

January 1968, it provided inspiration for resistance by the Poles. Throughout the rest of that year, Polish students demanded the right to freedom of expression and an end to censorship. They were to pay dearly for their outcry. Under the leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulka, the government put down the student insurrection by arresting more than 3,000 people in March 1968. An additional 30,000 were forced into exile, and countless others who had been involved in the student protests were killed.[80] In retrospect, it seems that the students had failed to secure sufficiently widespread support from the Polish population for their demands. The government exploited this gap through a campaign to persuade industrial workers that the students' cause was not their own, as it discredited their efforts. The government's propaganda appealed to many factory workers who could not see fighting for free speech when what they needed first was higher wages.[81] One young man, a short, mustached electrician named Lech Walesa, however, encouraged his fellow shipyard laborers to view the student grievances as being related to their own concerns.[82] He tried, unsuccessfully, to rally the workers to the students' side with the appeal that all Poles were essentially fighting for the same thing: the freedom to lead better lives.

It was not until December 1970 that laborers in Warsaw reached a breaking point. Sudden price increases without corresponding wage boosts left workers struggling to feed their families. More than 9,000 angry workers took to the streets, only to be met by swift and brutal government repression.[83] During the three-day struggle, fifty workers were killed, their names to be silently offered up as martyrs in the cause of Polish freedom in the months and years that followed. Throughout the mid-1970s, their loss was remembered, as the socio-economic situation steadily worsened under the watch of the communist leadership of Edward Gierek.[84]

The face of the resistance was altered in 1976 when two events modified Polish efforts to resist Soviet-backed oppression. In June, the government called for significant price increases in staple items, sparking demonstrations that were once again brutally repressed. In response to the needs of workers (and their families) who had been jailed, exiled or fired, a group of intellectuals set up Komitet Obrony Robotników (the Committee for the Workers' Defense), more typically known by its Polish acronym, KOR. For the first time, groups without ties to the communist regime were

80. Lech Walesa, with Arkadiusz Rybicki, *The Struggle and the Triumph: An Autobiography*, trans. by Franklin Philip and Helen Mahut (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1992), p. 315; Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 15.
81. Lazo, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 34.
82. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., pp. 15–16.
83. Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph*, op. cit., p. 315.
84. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 20.

being organized.[85] In retrospect, KOR was the development that signaled the coalescence of Polish society into a concerted effort against communist rule. Students began collaborating with workers and speaking on their behalf; laborers coordinated their efforts with dissident intellectuals. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church was experiencing something of a renaissance and had expressed its interest in human rights. KOR and the church complemented each other's efforts, producing a unique set of circumstances that opened the door to a peaceful revolution that would take a decade to realize.

Committee for the Workers' Defense (KOR)

Throughout the 1970s, knowledge of varied techniques of resistance spread quickly. A Catholic periodical published translations of publications on nonviolence by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Groups that were undertaking hunger strikes specifically mentioned Gandhi and King as their influences.[86] A population that was endeavoring to understand the significance to their own lives of such faraway and historic movements found that they had an immediate and culturally comfortable variation right at home – KOR.

KOR holds the key to understanding the Polish rejection of violent revolution and adoption of the widespread use of nonviolent techniques. This organization represented the joining of the Catholic intelligentsia with the secular political Left in the fight for the ideals of tolerance, Truth, justice and human dignity.[87] Secular leftists such as Leszek Kolakowski, Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik sat down and deliberately forged alliances with individuals such as Jan Zieja, a Roman Catholic priest.

Though it was never intended to be anything but a small group advocating in defense of workers, KOR rapidly emerged as a significant pressure group against government repression and found that it had become the creative center for the formulation of opposition doctrine.[88] KOR blurred the lines between social action and political organization. Its leadership adopted a policy of using nonviolent means to attain self-development, what some would call civil society.[89] The ideas of KOR intellectuals echoed the thinking of Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi and King. KOR theorists championed the 'rejection of violence and the acceptance of brotherhood and of productive labour' as essential elements in the transformation of society.[90] Jacek Kuron

85. Lech Walesa, *A Way of Hope* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1987), p. 97.
86. Jan Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland* (Aldershot (United Kingdom), Gower Publishing Company, 1989), p. 95.
87. Ibid., p. 13.
88. Ibid., p. 10.
89. Ibid., p. 17.
90. Ibid., p. 81.

analyzed the history of Polish resistance over the centuries and came to the conclusion that 'the most effective form of resistance is based on solidarity', because such cohesion would let everyone know that the various resistance groups were united toward one common goal.[91] Nonviolent resistance was seen as the best means for reaching the desired end because it could minimize repression. By the middle and late 1970s, independent grass-roots local movements were spreading across Poland in validation of the basic thrust of KOR. The organization itself continued to maintain an apolitical stance, declaring that it was only a simple action group.

Changes in the organizational goals of the committee came in the autumn of 1977, when the group broadened its membership, generalized its goals and stepped up its activities. A newly reorganized Committee for Social Self-Defense, or KSS-KOR, set out on an expanded mission. It worked to combat discrimination, stop illegal government behavior, fight for the protection of rights and freedoms and support efforts to obtain full rights and freedoms.[92] Ultimately, through the championing of such universal goals, the members of KOR overcame traditional barriers that had in the past impeded social and political interaction among different groups. The organization came to represent the unification of Polish society, its finely focused emphasis aimed at overcoming repression.

Solidarnosc (Solidarity) and Lech Walesa

One person in particular realized the significance of this new atmosphere of coordination. Following his failed efforts to unite students and workers in 1968, shipyard electrician Lech Walesa thought at length about the difficulties that had been encountered and concluded that the one thing the Polish resistance most needed and lacked was solidarity. This was the same conclusion that was being reached during the 1970s by the church and KOR.[93]

Walesa paid dearly for his activism, consistently being fired from his jobs. Despite the hardships, he continued to voice his criticism of the government and, in each of his new jobs, urged fellow workers to organize. In April 1978, Walesa and others formed the Baltic Committee for Free and Independent Trade Unions. One of the first actions of the surreptitious organization was publication of the 'Charter of Workers' Rights' in the committee's magazine, *Coastal Worker*. The thousand-word document was signed by sixty-five activists, most of them intellectuals.[94] The manifesto encouraged people to stand up for their rights and look after their own interests. The ideas and activities of the trade union committee complemented

91. Ibid., p. 18.
92. Ibid., pp. 22–3.
93. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 25.
94. Michael Dobbs, K. S. Karol and Dessa Trevisan, *Poland, Solidarity, Walesa* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), p. 67; Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 26.

– and were supported by – the work of KOR and student efforts.[95] Their activities were carried out in public, and deliberations were conducted openly, even though such willingness to reject secretive behavior led to constant arrest and job loss for those involved. The leadership was always in flux, but the message of a united effort was reaching the people.[96] They were kept well informed of the various activities of the slowly consolidating resistance by the more than thirty independent newspapers and publications in circulation by 1979.[97] Meanwhile, conditions continued to deteriorate.

Small strikes began erupting throughout Poland. Interestingly, the word 'strike' was not mentioned in the Polish media reports concerning the various incidents; after all, if a communist government was supposed to be the true representative of the industrial proletariat and their interests, there should be no reason for workers to strike.[98] Yet strike they did. On 14 August 1980, the workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk went on strike. As the former master electrician and one who had previously called for unity, Lech Walesa, hearing of the strike, jumped the fence into the shipyard and took the lead.[99] Instead of the workers abandoning the shipyard, the customary practice in such economic noncooperation, Walesa encouraged them to make the action a sit-down strike – an extended work stoppage. Walesa took pains to coordinate the workers so that they could present a coherent program of demands. He also called for the formation of a strike committee to present the laborers' demands to shipyard management as well as to government representatives who had become involved due to the magnitude and severity of the labor action. The workers were petitioning for a wage increase, immunity for strikers, permission to build a monument to the martyrs of the 1970 massacre, and the re-hiring of Walesa and another popular shipyard worker.[100]

The populace of Gdansk fully supported the efforts of the workers. Taxi drivers offered free trips to and from the shipyard for supporters of the strike; wives and mothers cooked meals and brought them to the strikers; Catholic mass was celebrated in the shipyard; and the gates were strewn with swags and bunting in the colors and symbols of Polish nationalism.[101] Discipline was imposed: drinking was prohibited, and orderly conduct was the rule, so as not to provoke government reprisals.[102]

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95. Robert Eringer, *Strike for Freedom: The Story of Lech Walesa and Polish Solidarity* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1982), p. 67.
96. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 26.
97. Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland*, op. cit., p. 27.
98. Eringer, *Strike for Freedom*, op. cit., p. 60.
99. Ibid., p. 53.
100. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., pp. 30–1.
101. Eringer, *Strike for Freedom*, op. cit., p. 55; Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 33.
102. Walesa, *A Way of Hope*, op. cit., p. 130.

News of the strike spread quickly throughout Poland as KOR took the role of serving as the clearinghouse for information on the escalating patterns of noncooperation. KOR's role quickly changed to that of an active link in coordinating the many factories and shipyards.[103] Word soon reached Gdansk and the Lenin Shipyard that factories and shipyards across the nation were joining in the strike. In an effort to include the grievances of all Polish workers, hundreds if not thousands of proposals were sifted and considered by the strike leaders. The four original demands of the Lenin strike committee, formulated in the first hours of the strike, were soon expanded to twenty-one, including the right to form trade unions, the right to strike, improvement of work conditions and the right to a free press.[104] The Lenin strike committee became an interfactory strike committee. The unified spirit spreading throughout Poland earned the movement the name Solidarnosc, or Solidarity. With its origin and primary doctrinal sources in KOR and the Catholic Church, it had an unshakable base.

Walesa had headed negotiations with the government. Transmitted by loudspeaker, the proceedings were heard by the striking workers in the Gdansk shipyard.[105] On 31 August 1980, the negotiations ended. The government agreed to all twenty-one demands. The Gdansk Agreement, as it was called, regulated employer–employee relationships. Collective bargaining was to occur through free trade unions, and emphasis was placed on an economy rooted in self-reliance, with local autonomy for both enterprises and trade unions. Its provisions did more than satisfy the demands of the laborers – it brought worldwide attention to the problems suffered by those under communist rule and held up the remarkable resilience of the fledgling Solidarity for all to see.

Within the Soviet Union, Solidarity's potency was also recognized. In early December, several months after the Gdansk Agreement was signed, Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev dispatched between fifteen and twenty military divisions to the Polish border for purposes of crushing, or at least threatening, Solidarity. President Jimmy Carter, consistent with the pressure he was already exerting on the Soviet Union through his assertion of human rights, telephoned Brezhnev and warned him not to send his forces into Poland.[106] Indeed, within weeks of taking office in January 1977, Carter had secretly ordered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to increase its support of dissident groups and to flood the Soviet bloc with books and journals by and about

103. Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland*, op. cit., p. 28.
104. Walesa, *A Way of Hope*, op. cit., pp. 131–3.
105. Eringer, *Strike for Freedom*, op. cit., p. 55.
106. Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), p. 210; Martin Walker, 'Playing the Carter Card', *Washington Post*, 19 June 1994.

human rights activists.[107] The Brezhnev Doctrine began unraveling, as a blend of policies that would be continued under President Ronald Reagan was set in motion. Brezhnev did not send Soviet troops into Poland.

The emergence of Solidarity as an independent free trade union whose task it was to protect the workers seemed to make obsolete the need for an organization like KOR. Most of those who were involved in KOR felt that the efforts of the Polish people would be best realized under the unified leadership of Solidarity. Many leading members of KOR were already assuming positions within the trade union. The final act of the Committee for the Workers' Defense was to present a report on the human rights situation in Poland to the Helsinki Watch Committee. KOR was formally disbanded on 18 September 1981.[108] It had been successful in creating an atmosphere of coordinated nonviolent resistance and organization on behalf of the Polish worker.

Ouster of a tyrannical system

A difficult path still lay ahead. Changes that had been agreed upon were slow in coming. The government tried to derail the process stipulated by the Gdansk Agreement by delaying the official registration of Solidarity as a free trade union until November 1980, three months later than stipulated.[109] Despite the stalling, the union used the hiatus to register 10 million members.[110] Efforts for change were further hampered as the regime, now led by Stanislaw Kania, continued to break its promises; workers expressed their frustration through random strikes. Coordination within Solidarity broke down. Internal and external tensions came to a head when, in March 1981, police broke into a Solidarity meeting in the small town of Bydgoszcz and beat up several members. Walesa feared the eruption of civil war. In an effort to avoid hostilities, he re-entered negotiations with the government. The exploitation of any and all possibilities for negotiation by Walesa was consistent with insights he had gleaned from his study of Gandhian campaigns. His fellow union leaders, however, felt betrayed by Walesa's decision, thinking that the time was ripe for yet one more massive strike. Some were also concerned that his desire for negotiation was a sign that he was now working with the government. Walesa would not back down from his insistence on negotiation, but feared that Solidarity was facing its demise.[111] The workers' propensity for unselective strikes was confounding

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107. Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 90–2, 142, 168.
108. Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland*, op. cit., p. 29.
109. Eringer, *Strike for Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 88–9.
110. Lazo, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 46.
111. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., pp. 42–4.

to Walesa, who saw the options in much different terms. He thought the union had made its point and that the time had come for a sustained and constructive dialogue.

The political landscape was suddenly altered in September 1981 when Kania was replaced by the man who was already prime minister and chief of the armed forces, General Wojciech Jaruzelski. The new leadership began surreptitious efforts to undermine Walesa and his philosophy of seeking a negotiated settlement. It was easy for the regime to exploit Solidarity's internal confusion and inconsistency. While Walesa preferred to adhere to Gandhian injunctions for maximum contact, within Solidarity's ranks many were acting as if the Communist Party had already disappeared. Workers were striking almost constantly, against the advice of Solidarity's leadership and particularly in defiance of Walesa's judgment. Lacking a system of regional and local offices linked to the leadership, these episodic strikes occurred without strategy. Walesa became known as the 'Fireman' because of his rushing to put out blazing actions across the country. Multiple, uncoordinated voices resounding across Poland were creating dissonance and chaos. Following the initial success of the Lenin Shipyard strike, some laborers seemed more interested in seeing that those who had benefited from their suffering should pay for the stolen years and their lost comrades.

> It wasn't easy to lead a movement of such diversity. . . . Workers were eager to settle accounts. . . . They wanted to be rid of incompetent or dishonest factory bosses and government officials who had been feathering their nests for years at the public's expense.
>
> Lech had his work cut out trying to persuade the new Solidarity members that it was foolish to waste their energies on revenge. . . . [He] also had to assure a nervous government that Solidarity had no political ambitions and no desire to endanger the Warsaw Pact. . . . [It] saw its role as that of a necessary permanent loyal opposition. It existed not to challenge the pact but simply to protect the workers' interests.[112]

While Solidarity representatives repeatedly said in talks with the government that they did not intend to dismantle the government but only wanted more freedom and better living conditions, at the grass roots the message was different. The increasing number of random strikes did not reassure those in power that Solidarity wanted to change the political and socio-economic structures – as opposed to changing the individuals upholding the structures. Walesa sometimes seemed to be the only one who understood that the struggle needed to be against the antagonism and not the antagonist. 'Solidarity's moment had come a little too soon, before the people were really ready to cope with the exciting new concepts of freedom and democracy. . . . [They] had no clear policies . . . they wanted too much

112. Ibid., pp. 40–1.

too quickly and were inclined to use him [Walesa] as a scapegoat when things didn't go their way.'[113] Solidarity also made the mistake of extending its goals, shifting and escalating its demands from one month to the next, rather than seeking to win small conflicts and allow its opponent to gain confidence in their interactions.[114]

A major setback occurred on 12 December 1981, when 500 days of nonviolent measures came to an end. The Jaruzelski government descended on Solidarity buildings, taking possession of property, arresting members and declaring the union illegal. Martial law or 'war', as Polish citizens called it, was officially imposed. One of the first to be arrested was Walesa. From prison, he sent out a call – an appeal echoed by the rest of Solidarity's leadership – for all Polish citizens to resist the regime nonviolently. On more than one occasion, he invoked the memory and inspiration of Gandhi.[115] 'The ethics of Solidarity, with its consistent rejection of the use of force', wrote famed dissident and prisoner Adam Michnik, one of the more influential theoreticians in the Polish struggle and later the head of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's largest daily newspaper, 'has a lot in common with the idea of nonviolence as espoused by Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.'[116]

The imposition of martial law and the arrest of Walesa rejuvenated a Polish desire to unite under the banner of nonviolent direct action. Eager to continue the struggle, the populace responded quickly, inspired by reports that Walesa had refused to divulge any information to his captors. Walesa's silence and his use of the potent method of fasting became the symbols of the resistance. Groups named 'Without Violence' began emerging throughout Poland, laying claim to an inheritance from nonviolent movements around the world. Underground publication of works by Gene Sharp helped to guide their thinking.[117]

In its imperfect state, Solidarity remained alive, even if driven underground. In a sense, the resistance broadened during this phase, as communities sought creative ways to defy communist rule and express dissatisfaction with their supposed leaders. Citizens refused to get their news from official sources. Others resorted to the most drastic of nonviolent tactics, that of 'removing themselves' from Poland, emigrating in any way they could, moving westward. Reminiscent of the Bardoli farmers in India

113. Ibid., p. 41.
114. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal*, op. cit., pp. 142, 145.
115. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., pp. 48–9; Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland*, op. cit., pp. 79, 95.
116. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, trans. by Maya Latynski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 88–9; Christine Spolar, 'Ex-Communist Presses Poland's Case', *Washington Post*, 8 July 1996, p. A8.
117. Zielonka, *Political Ideas in Contemporary Poland*, op. cit., p. 95.

who voluntarily left their homes to undermine the authority of the Bombay government – the ultimate tool used in the 1928 Bardoli peasant *satyagraha* – Poles elected this technique, which dates to the Prophet Muhammad's seventh-century emigration. Perhaps no more immutable form of noncooperation can be found than *hijra* – Arabic, 'to abandon' – to deny the antagonist's objectives.[118] Although in the lexicon of nonviolent resistance the term is not meant in a religious sense, and might not even have been spoken by those employing it, the exercise of *hijra* as an historic option repeatedly came into play in the refashioning of the European continent in the 1980s and 1990s.

Walesa was released from prison on 15 November 1982. Polish authorities claimed that he had been forgotten and that his movement was dead, but the huge crowds that welcomed him home told another story. Following the suspension of martial law on 13 December 1982, Walesa tried to revive his efforts. He was constantly followed and harassed.[119] Solidarity members found themselves being arrested and beaten, but the Poles managed to maintain their nonviolent stance; 'pursuing nonviolent solutions to the nation's problems was a deep commitment'.[120] Polish resistance efforts were again rejuvenated in 1983 with the visit of Pope John Paul II, the first Slavic pope. In meeting with Walesa, the pope stressed the significance of the Poles' adoption of nonviolent strategies: 'If the world grasps what you are trying to do, if it sees in your movement hope and a way to resolve conflicts, it is precisely because you have renounced violence.'[121]

Solidarity's acclaim beyond its own borders became evident when Walesa was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1983. Fearful that he would not be allowed back into Poland if he left, Walesa asked his wife and son to travel to Oslo to accept the award for him. In his acceptance speech, which they carried, he spoke on behalf of the people of Poland and confirmed his faith in nonviolent struggle: 'My most ardent desire is that my country will recapture its historic opportunity for a peaceful evolution, and that Poland will prove to the world that even the most complex situations can be solved by a dialogue and not by force.'[122] Solidarity became recognized as the 'first mass nonviolent challenge to Soviet domination'.[123]

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118. Galtung does not consider this tool to be particularly Gandhian because it does not reveal the goal. One's purpose, he points out, is not to leave home. Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal*, op. cit., pp. 115–16.
119. Lazo, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 49.
120. Craig, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 53.
121. Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph*, op. cit., p. 118.
122. 'Walesa Peace Prize Acceptance Address, December 11, 1983', in Carolyn Goldinger and Margaret C. Thompson (eds.), *Historic Documents of 1983* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1984), p. 927.
123. Ross A. Johnson, *Poland in Crisis* (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 1982), p. 4.

The euphoria in Poland aroused by the international importance of the Nobel Prize would not last, as the Poles witnessed a decline of progress throughout the rest of the decade. By 1988, Solidarity was working to control rampant strikes in an effort to maintain a coordinated and united front, while at the same time it was demanding negotiations with the government once again. The communist regime recognized the ability of Walesa to organize and lead the anxious populace, and along with this awareness came the realization that the bureaucracy no longer governed the people. The Polish people were, in fact, in control of the situation.[124] Discussions were finally initiated between Solidarity and the government. The party fought to maintain the status quo, and the opposition vied for change. Negotiations finally ended with the party promising change.

Poland's transformation moved at a rapid pace. Elections were held in 1989, giving a majority of the seats in the parliament, or Sejm, to Solidarity. The following year Walesa was elected president of the Third Republic of Poland.[125] Poland had become the first communist state to bring to an end, through nonviolent struggle, a tyrannical system.[126] By the time communism fell, the populace had been training itself in nonviolent methods for more than a decade.

The Pastors' Movement in East Germany

We were prepared for everything, except for candles and prayers.
East German security chief[127]

A Protestant tradition of individual dissent

East Germany included what was known as Saxony early in the sixteenth century, when Frederick III, the Saxon Elector, made Wittenberg a center of learning and gave signal protection to Martin Luther there and elsewhere, so that Saxony became the cradle of the Protestant Reformation. In the eighteenth century the Hohenzollern dynasty gained control of the kingdom of Prussia and of Brandenburg, with its capital at Berlin, and over the years came to rule much of northern Germany, including Saxony. So East Germany in various ways represented a continuation in the twentieth century of the civilization of Saxony and Prussia.

The London Protocol of September 1944 and the Potsdam Agreement of August 1945 had divided Germany, assigning East Germany to Soviet dominion, while placing some eastern portions under Polish authority,

124. Lazo, *Lech Walesa*, op. cit., p. 55.
125. Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph*, op. cit., p. 318.
126. Editorial Desk, '"Lustration" Loses in Poland', *New York Times*, 7 June 1992, p. 18.
127. James M. Wall, 'Rough Transitions: Churches in Political Struggles', *Christian Century*, 13 March 1996, p. 283.

Lech Walesa, the Gdansk shipyard electrician who led Solidarnosc, or Solidarity, won the 1983 Nobel Prize for Peace and was subsequently elected president of Poland. Visiting the Norwegian Nobel Institute, in Oslo in March 1995, to his right is Geir Lundestad, historian and director of the institute.
(Photo: Arne Knudsen, Knudsens Fotosenter, and the Norwegian Nobel Institute)

The Reverend Christian Führer, pastor of the Nikolai Church (Nikolaikirche) in Leipzig, who helped to spark the Pastors' Movement in East Germany.
(Photo: Courtesy of Christian Führer)

Pastor Führer standing in front of the Nikolai Church from whose doors, in the autumn of 1989, huge candlelit demonstrations poured into the streets of Leipzig.
(Photo: Steffen Giersch)

returning the Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia and restoring Austria. Upon the defeat of Nazism and Hitler's collapse at the end of the Second World War, in 1949 eastern Germany – which became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – was formally separated from western Germany. German unity was a thing of the past, as more than 12 million people were dislocated. This fracture, which severed countless families, became an emblem of the larger cold war political struggle: West Germany was aligned with Western Europe, and East Germany was under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union. Leaders of the GDR proclaimed their country a 'multiparty' state but, in reality, it was understood that the Communist Party, the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED, was the established leadership and that it controlled the citizens of the GDR. Repression, propaganda and any other means deemed necessary were employed against opposition to the East German Government, which, under what later became known in the West as the Brezhnev Doctrine, could count on the Soviet Union's military muscle for putting down any revolts.

Opposition in East Germany had shown itself almost from the moment of the communist regime's birth, certainly as early as the 1950s. In the first decade of Soviet hegemony, a revolt occurred on 17 June 1953, consisting of a declared general strike and a massive march led by the labor movement through the streets of East Berlin.[128] The people of East Germany were provoked by government persecution of the churches and by constant food shortages. Controls instituted by the Soviets on industrial workers were also a major cause of the popular outpouring.[129] The huge demonstrations were put down with great brutality by troops from the Soviet Union that were stationed in East Germany.[130] As a result of the harsh responses elicited by any form of popular protest, for a time opposition and dissident activities against the regime were mostly limited to the writings of intellectuals or quiet efforts by activists within small élite circles – that is, until the events of the autumn of 1989.[131] Intellectuals who were politically to the left nourished and sustained a powerful resistance in the world of ideas and kept alive the fervency of criticism and independent thought. An anti-nuclear war and peace movement developed unofficially and out of sight. Although the grass-roots defiance of the Polish Solidarnosc antedated East

128. See Heinz Brandt, 'The East German Popular Uprising, 17 June 1953', *The Review: Quarterly Studies* (Imre Nagy Institute for Political Research, Brussels), October 1959; Stefan Brant, *The East German Rising, 17th June 1953* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1955), pp. 62–79.

129. See Reinhardt Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry: Ideologies of Management in the Course of Industrialization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1956), pp. 387–400.

130. See Rainer Hildebrandt, *The Explosion: The Uprising behind the Iron Curtain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955).

131. Roland Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Albert Einstein Institution, 1993), p. 6.

German opposition to communist rule, the East German resistance nonetheless became one of the earliest and most recognized mass movements against the Soviet rulers and their puppet governments.

Within East Germany, the tradition of the Protestant Church – the German Evangelische Kirche, or the Evangelical Church, also known as the Lutheran Church – provided room for individual dissent on the basis of conscience. This conception of an individual's right to voice his or her disagreement with those in authority dates back to the Protestant Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther in the early sixteenth century. Also influential was a tradition in the German Reformed Church, which descended from the Swiss reformers John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli. For four centuries, the German Reformed Church, smaller in numbers than the Evangelical Church, had embodied the Calvinist tradition calling for the personal freedom to deviate from the official government perspective.

Protestant resistance to Hitler had come from these same traditions established in the sixteenth century. During the Nazi era and the Second World War, two Protestant Church organizations worked together to resist the efforts of the National Socialists to gain control of them. The Reformed League, founded on the four-hundredth anniversary of Zwingli's birth in an attempt to preserve the Reformed heritage, joined with the Confessing Church, an undertaking that had been set up to resist Nazism within the Evangelical Church. Resistance on matters of conscience in East Germany was, as is evident, deeply rooted in the Protestant tradition. Some Protestant bishops had accepted the dominion of the SED state and adopted the position of 'the church in socialism', meaning that the clergy would express criticism of the regime without altering the socialist order, but this was by no means true of all churches.[132] The predominant Evangelical and Calvinist Protestant traditions meant that a pastor in Leipzig or Dresden, in East Germany, might find it easier to take a stand contrary to the political regime than might a priest of a Roman Catholic parish in Cologne or Munich, in West Germany, where more than 40 percent of the population was Catholic. Anyone familiar with this Protestant legacy would not have been entirely surprised that a pastors' movement would emerge and have a major influence in bringing down both the communist regime and the wall that had become the universal symbol for the cold war.

Reform discussions of limited scope had been quietly taking place in East German churches throughout the 1980s, and demonstrations were held sporadically in 1988. Yet it was not until a boycott took place against manipulated local elections during the spring of 1989 that one could actually

132. Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 9; Robert Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990* (New York/London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1991), p. 222.

speak of the development of a broad, active, popular resistance against the regime.[133] The mass resistance expressed itself through two principal techniques. One was street demonstrations, which resulted from civilian organization, largely under the protection of the Protestant churches. The other – 'exit' – was recognizable from the repertoire of nonviolent methods as *hijra*.

Hijra

In the years after 1945, registered refugees numbering 3,429,042 had fled from East Germany.[134] As the memory of the 1953 march by labor and the accompanying general strike lived on in the public mind, many citizens continued to exercise the only kind of opposition that was possible for them to organize – *hijra*. A steady flow of East Germans left for the West, into self-imposed exile. At huge risk to themselves and those they left behind, they sought refuge elsewhere through what the SED government called 'illegal exit'; others died in the effort.[135] To try to stanch the exodus, in June 1961 the government ordered the building of a wall to separate East Berlin from West Berlin as well as to surround West Berlin and prevent access to that part of the city from other parts of East Germany. Berlin had been the capital of Prussia, the largest and most important of the German states. After the Second World War, what had been Prussia was divided into East Germany, West Germany, part of the Soviet Union and Poland. By closing off West Berlin with an 'iron curtain' along the western borders of the city, the only escape route for East Germans into West Germany was closed off.

Construction began on the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961, with the backing of the Soviet Union and endorsement of the Warsaw Pact. Initially made of cinder blocks and barbed wire, the original barrier was replaced by a series of concrete walls topped by barbed wire and guarded with gun emplacements and watch towers. By the 1980s, the iron curtain was twenty-eight miles long, dividing Berlin. The wall, located entirely within the eastern Soviet-occupied portion of Germany, proceeded for another seventy-five miles around West Berlin, cutting it off from the rest of East Germany. Perilous efforts to cross the death zone of concrete impediments, minefields and barbed wire resulted in hundreds of deaths. The East German SED had penned its people by force, believing that large numbers would otherwise 'vote with their feet' in favor of the German Federal Republic in the west.[136] Once the wall was complete, East Germany lay as if under a shroud, out of sight, immobile, with hardly any news except for the occasional

133. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., p. 7.
134. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 8.
135. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., pp. 6, 11.
136. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., pp. 4, 17.

death as someone desperately dared the fortifications, walls and electrified fences. For twenty-eight years, the quiet flow of persons risking all continued, but then things changed unexpectedly in 1989.

On 2 May 1989, Hungarian soldiers literally cut a hole in the barbed-wire barrier along the Austrian frontier separating East from West. A reform-oriented communist government in Budapest – bearing in mind Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's restructuring, or *perestroika* – decided to bring down the electrified border of barbed wire, security stations, fences, guard posts and other installations of the 'iron curtain' along the Austro-Hungarian border. All through the summer, East Germans crowded into Czechoslovakia and Hungary, presumably for holidays in sister countries where they could travel without visas, while in actuality seeking a roundabout way to the West.[137] East Germans fled into Austria in desperation. Thousands made their way in an eastward loop, down through Czechoslovakia into Hungary – all the while behind the 'iron curtain' – and thence into Austria and up into West Germany. Others sought physical protection inside the West German embassies and diplomatic missions in Warsaw, Prague, East Germany and Budapest.[138] By mid-August, 661 refugees had charged across the Austro-Hungarian line.[139] During their *hijra*, 10,000 East Germans left daily, with the result that industry, labor and public services were disrupted.[140]

The Hungarians were seeking to promote their own democratic agenda and decided to violate a pre-existing travel agreement with the GDR, stipulating that all refugees be returned to a neighboring Eastern bloc nation.[141] On 11 September 1989, Hungary unilaterally terminated its agreement with the ruling East German Government and formally opened its borders to Austria. No longer traversing through a hole, in only seventy-two hours a mass exodus of 15,000 East Germans arrived in the West.[142] By the end of September, arrangements had been made for special trains to carry East Germans to the West. In secret negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations, the GDR agreed to expel by train East Germans who had sought safe havens in embassies throughout East German territory. They called it 'expulsion', to mask the impact of the mass desertion, but its net effect was to legalize the emigration.[143] West German television stations broadcast the schedules of departing 'refugee trains', information that could be received in homes in East Germany.

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137. Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990*, op. cit., p. 67.
138. David M. Keithly, *The Collapse of East German Communism: The Year the Wall Came Down* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992), Chap. 10.
139. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 15.
140. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., p. 8.
141. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., pp. 15, 16.
142. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., pp. 7–8.
143. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 21.

Violence became part of the scenario when the East German Government decided to alter its new 'expulsion' policy and require visas for travel to Czechoslovakia. Some 2,000 persons were found to be without visas and were summarily thrown off the trains. Angry youths by the hundreds blocked rail tracks and tried to leap onto the refugee trains as they sped to the West. On 3 October in Dresden, when the special trains did not make a stop there, 10,000 anxious would-be émigrés with cobblestones battled police forces with water cannon. The main train station in Dresden was damaged. The violence was quickly quelled by the churches and the growing numbers of civilian organizations who called for peaceful resistance.[144]

The exodus confirmed what East Germans already knew in their hearts – that their society would continue only if its people remained physically blockaded. The mass flight emboldened dissenters to oppose the government, and the cooperation of the people with the government's use of force began to be withdrawn. Although the mass exodus may have been the worm whose turning and boring first caused the regime to begin falling apart, the combination of thousands voicing their opposition through street demonstrations and expressing their protest by *hijra* was catastrophic for the SED government.

Mass demonstrations and the Pastors' Movement

Although the churches of East Germany had been supporting reform efforts in limited circles since the 1940s, by the end of the summer in 1989 such activities were escalating. The churches not only provided eminent sanction for resistance based on individual conscience, they were the only large organizations not directly controlled by the communist state. Their auspices provided a mooring for organizing activities. As independent as any institutions were allowed to be in a stratified and rigidly restricted East German society, the churches possessed buildings, credibility, skilled members, networks among congregations and inspiration available nowhere else. They also retained the trust of a great proportion of the population and were able to reach many homes. The edifices of the churches offered safe meeting rooms, and their pulpits a respected means of communication about events. In addition to the more than 400-year-old tradition of the Protestant Church in Germany, there was an underlying Judeo-Christian legacy of resistance – nurtured from the time of the ancient Romans onward – that provided a framework for separating one's allegiance from the rulers. 'Put not your trust in princes,' the Old Testament psalmist had written.[145] The churches of East Germany helped thousands to preserve the trenchant dichotomy

144. Ibid., p. 22.
145. Psalm 146:3.

between the corruption of the secular communist state and the realm of the spiritual. Moreover, their doors were also open to those questioning spirits who were not necessarily devout but who sought out free-thinking clergy for consultation on pressing issues. Some activists spurned flight but hoped to improve life within the GDR.[146]

Both clergy and laity who were opponents of the regime had a small umbrella of protection. The ministers and lay leaders employed this shield to the fullest in their outspoken and unrelenting criticism of the system. Their houses of worship gave protection and, when demonstrators needed succor or safety, the churches provided sanctuary both literally and figuratively. Religious journals and church newsletters were not censored to the same degree as were the secular news media. Photocopying machines in church basements were readily available for the reproduction of leaflets. 'East Germany would not be free without the courage and moral guidance of bishops, pastors, and lay people in the Lutheran church,' commented one observer. 'The church provided the only safe haven for people to speak openly and passionately about their troubled lives in a closed society.'[147]

The church leaders who were sheltering meetings and gatherings propounded *Keine Gewalt* – nonviolence – as the only course for the opposition; votive candles became the emblem of nonviolent struggle. The commitment of the ministers was moral and ethical, rooted in a determination to break the cycle of violence, yet it was also highly strategic. Nonviolence, they believed, was the only thing that could work against such a heavily armed regime backed by Soviet force. So strictly was nonviolent discipline instilled and maintained that the burning tapers, originally a testimony of adherence to the principles of nonviolence, soon became the overall symbol for resistance against the regime.[148] The flickering candles reminded opponents that the demonstrators were unarmed, while their numbers made clear that the regime no longer controlled the country's human resources. Together, the emblematic candles and audacity of popular defiance compounded the government's quandary. The disciplined use of nonviolence undermined the regime's predilection for using brute force and, thus, allowed the protests to survive and escalate.[149] What came to be known as the Pastors' Movement gave birth to the second expression of resistance used by East Germans – mass demonstrations organized by the groups that emerged in the shadow of the churches.

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146. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 36.
147. Lance Dickie, 'East Germany's Revolution – Keepers of the Faith', *Seattle Times*, 4 November 1990, p. A21.
148. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., p. 15.
149. Peter Neckermann, *The Unification of Germany or the Anatomy of a Peaceful Revolt* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1991), pp. 82–94 (Monograph 33).

Street demonstrations

While some East Germans were leaving to resist, others clung to the theory that they must stay for the same reason. Under the protection of the pastors and churches, and encouraged by the refugee crisis, popular opposition activists began openly organizing. Demonstrations occurred in many cities and were coordinated by groups that appeared almost overnight. The New Forum (Neues Forum) was founded in Grünheide on 9–10 September 1989, not as a political party but, rather, as a network of democratic, decentralized local initiatives for debate.[150] It was set up by six physicians, four physicists, three clergy, three students and fourteen other intellectuals to appeal for an 'awakening '89' and serve as a 'political platform'. Two days later, Democracy Now! (Demokratie Jetzt) was established by a physicist, an historian, a pastor and a film director. Appealing for 'peaceful democratic renewal', they invited Christians and critically thinking Marxists to join 'an alliance of all reformers'. The Democratic Awakening (Demokratischer Aufbruch) was formed on 1 October and called for 'a socialist society on a democratic basis' with human rights, travel, a freer market and independent trade unions. Comprised of Protestant clergy, it presented a more cautious appearance than the secular organizations that were springing up. It could avail itself of the facilities of the Protestant Church and attracted a disproportionate share of Western news coverage. When the broad-based civic movement did not respond to the concerns of women, an autonomous feminist movement was sparked to fight sexual inequality. Although women were constitutionally equal with men in East Germany, the reality of daily life proved that women were bowed down by restrictive customs, extremely long hours of work and unequal pay. By December, an Independent Women's Association had formed. Environmental issues had been raised by Democratic Awakening, and, in addition, a Green Party came into existence by late autumn, when ecological concerns appeared to have been lost among the deliberations of all the other groups.[151]

Street protests organized by these groups became routine in almost every city in the country.[152] The government tried to suppress the demonstrations by force, but eventually backed down in view of the massive resistance; the regime began to retrench by appointing moderates to government positions. Despite governmental efforts to quarantine East Germans from contact with Poland, as if Solidarnosc were a contagious disease, the lessons from Solidarity nonetheless penetrated the country, providing guidance about how citizens might challenge a communist regime.[153] Also, since the 1970s, perhaps 90 percent of the populace had been able to receive

150. Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990*, op. cit., pp. 227, 228.
151. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 40.
152. Ibid., p. 8.
153. Ibid., p. 31.

West German television programs, and the result had been to create a sense of illegitimacy in the regime's reports about its internal prosperity, because viewers were able to see with their own eyes the reality of the economic gap between the East and West.[154]

Thus, two powerful forces – the churches and the people – were joined together in search of a better way. The *Wende* – the turning, turnabout or policy reversal, as it was called – would begin in Leipzig, yet would soon sweep the nation.

The Nikolai Church

If the mass grass-roots movement of peaceful revolt against East Germany's brand of communism had a single birthplace, it is widely considered to have been the Nikolai Church (Nikolaikirche) in Leipzig. Formerly an important city in Saxony, in Goethe's day Leipzig was considered to be 'little Paris'.[155] The Nikolai Church was by 1982 providing a room for fifteen to twenty persons to gather to discuss nuclear disarmament.[156] One year later, a pattern had been established, so on Monday evenings at five o'clock people could be observed walking quietly through the church's cobbled yard on their way to the regular peace prayers.[157] The Reverend Christian Führer, described as 'quietly intense', had made the church's majestic baroque interior available for 'prayers for peace'.[158] Although originally intended to highlight the absurdity of the nuclear arms race, it was not long before the weekly prayer meetings became an ongoing symposium for voicing frustrations of all sorts, as a variety of issues were raised. Pastor Führer made it clear that the church could be used by people of all persuasions, not only by believers. By the spring of 1989, the Monday prayer meetings ended with participants filing out of the church and into public demonstrations against the regime; the number of citizens involved only went up.

When local election balloting in May gave an unbelievable 98.5 percent of the vote to the communists, the venting of popular rage expressed itself in the one location people in Leipzig felt they could trust: the Nikolai Church. It had become widely known that this was a safe place for activists.

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154. Gunter Holzweissig, *Massenmedien in der DDR* (Berlin: Verlag Gebrüder Holzapfel, 1989), pp. 69–71. In 1973, Communist Party leader Erich Honecker told the SED Central Committee that almost every household received West German radio: see Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 63.
155. Katharine Campbell, 'Germany Unites; Anxiety Stills the Rejoicing in Cradle of the Revolution', *Financial Times*, 4 October 1990, p. 3.
156. Dickie, 'East Germany's Revolution', op. cit., p. A21.
157. Campbell, 'Germany Unites; Anxiety Stills the Rejoicing in Cradle of the Revolution', op. cit., p. 3.
158. Cathy Moore, 'Disillusionment Has Come Quickly to Leipzig: East Germany's City of Heroes Has Become a Sad Shadow of Its Former Self', *Irish Times*, 1 March 1993, p. 8.

The church rose to its full stature, stepped into the debate, and led the sounding of grievances over governmental tampering in the elections.[159] More than one hundred people were arrested in Leipzig for protesting the elections, but the net effect was that, overnight, the number of dissenters swelled as more and more people converged on the embellished place of worship. In this environment, the regular Monday assemblies soon developed into institutionalized nonviolent protests for political freedoms, attracting more and more citizens each week. The prayer meetings grew into enormous street demonstrations of thousands of protesters.[160] 'We didn't start this, but we protected it,' declared Pastor Führer. 'We were the catalysts.'[161]

By the autumn of 1989, the Monday protests at the Nikolai Church had become one of the most symbolic and determining events of organized mass resistance in East Germany. The Monday demonstrations in Leipzig established the precedent for holding regular nonviolent mass gatherings. 'We Shall Overcome', the signature anthem of the American civil rights movement, was frequently sung. Protesters would form and re-form into fluid groups in order to avoid presenting a single, clear target for the security forces.[162] Arrests of dozens of demonstrators on 18 September 1989 only fueled the protests. On 2 October, more than 25,000 nonviolent protesters were dispersed by police violence. 'If you hold another one of these peace services, your church will go up in flames,' an anonymous caller threatened the Reverend Führer just before his service began on 9 October. He had reason for taking such intimidation seriously, because, on 7 October, police had arrested and beaten unarmed peaceful protesters outside his church.[163] The pastor, however, was undeterred. In fact, the increased possibility of violence served to fortify the resolve of the protesters to remain nonviolent.[164] Prior to the marches, Führer had beseeched the demonstrators in the Nikolai Church to maintain nonviolence and avoid doing anything that could lead to carnage: 'Put down your rocks.'[165] The demonstrators held intensely to the integrity of their cause. They rejected provocations by agents of the secret police who attempted to create pretexts for reprisals.[166]

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159. Dickie, 'East Germany's Revolution', op. cit., p. A21.
160. Stephen Kinzer, 'Five Years Later: Eastern Europe, Post Communism – A Special Report; A Wall of Resentment Now Divides Germany', *New York Times*, 14 October 1994, p. 1.
161. Kenneth W. Banta, 'Leipzig: Hotbed of Protest', *Time*, 27 November 1989, p. 41. A catalyst, or catalytic agent, when present in small amounts increases the rate of a reaction or process but is itself unchanged by the reaction.
162. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 33.
163. Francine Kiefer, 'East German Church Modifies Its Role', *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 January 1990, p. 4.
164. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 45.
165. Wall, 'Rough Transitions', op. cit., p. 283.
166. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 45.

Candles in the hands of tens of thousands

On 9 October, more than 70,000 people participated in a demonstration that started at the Nikolai Church, despite threats from the Stasi (Staatssicherheit, the secret police). 'The very size, anonymity, and peacefulness of the crowds were their best defense,' said the historian Konrad Jarausch, noting that a turning point had been reached. He observed, 'The next Monday demonstration would either bring "a breakthrough or civil war".'[167] Other churches had to be opened on 9 October because the Nikolai Church was full. Rumors began to fly because of the large numbers of security forces in evidence near the Nikolai Church, and an atmosphere of impending violence seemed to hang over the meeting. The schools had closed early that day, hospitals had stocked up on blood, police were armed and had orders to shoot, and armored vehicles were circling the city.[168] Pleas resounded from loudspeakers requesting open dialogue and peaceful interaction. Chants from the crowd echoed the same calls.

The East German regime had dispatched a force strong enough to halt the demonstrations of 9 October, but then the troops were conspicuously pulled back. In retrospect, it could be surmised that the state's traditional means of controlling the population was failing the government. Still, the record has not been clarified in regard to exactly what happened. What we do know is that security bosses were awaiting instructions from Moscow or Berlin directing them to subdue the giant demonstrations with force, but their orders never arrived. Somewhere between Moscow and Leipzig, a decision was made – perhaps several decisions – and the massacre or catastrophe that had been in the making did not occur. 'We planned everything,' said one security chief. 'We were prepared for everything, except for candles and prayers.'[169] From then on, it became evident that the government did not intend to crush the demonstrations. The timidity of the populace, an essential accompaniment to the SED's primacy, was transformed into adamantine resistance. Concluded Jarausch, 'The civic courage of Leipzig citizens prevailed because the Neues Forum, the leading opposition group, counselled peace, while the police, unsure of instructions and discipline, hesitated to use force.'[170] Leipzig was open to protest and discourse.

One week later, 120,000 protesters turned out.[171] On subsequent occasions, in excess of 150,000 people marched in the streets.[172] During the third weekend of October, demonstrators poured into the streets of Dresden, Chemnitz, Magdeburg, Erfurt and other cities; outside the Nikolai

167. Ibid., p. 34.
168. Ibid.
169. Wall, 'Rough Transitions', op. cit., p. 283.
170. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 34.
171. Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., p. 8.
172. Dickie, 'East Germany's Revolution', op. cit., p. A21.

Church, their numbers rose to above 300,000. On 30 October, the crowds in Leipzig exceeded 350,000 despite police obstructions. Meanwhile, this phenomenon was spreading to other parts of the country. 'Made known by word of mouth, called by crudely printed flyers, or announced in church, the marches . . . [had] no clear leaders or followers. . . . Protestors placed candles before the hated Stasi headquarters and kept rowdies from using force.'[173]

The first protests were composed mostly of young people, but the composition of the demonstrations evolved. 'The next thousands derived from circles of intellectuals and white collar employees who supported human rights', subsequent thousands were traditionally skilled workers, and 'the final hundreds of thousands were a cross-section of the previously apolitical population', noted Jarausch.[174]

Anxiety and fearfulness was also vanishing from rural hamlets. A journal kept by historian Robert Darnton describes how the Pastors' Movement brought to one town 'the revolution in the village'.[175] On 17 September, a group of district ministers held a special observance in the town of Freyburg. At the end of the service, when supplications and intercessions were offered by members of the congregation, the prayers concerned the opening of borders, the right to travel and the release of dissidents from prison. One of the pastors present suggested that everyone meet the following Sunday in another village. On 24 September, twenty-two persons showed up; two weeks later, there were forty-three. As the weeks passed, subsequent meetings took place in other villages. The group continued to grow until the numbers were so large that they no longer fitted in the pastors' residences. Having started with a core group – members of congregations – other people soon joined from all walks of life: nurses, technicians, factory workers, clerks, mechanics, electricians, teachers and farmers. Among those who had gathered was the Reverend Christoph Müller, from the Laucha cathedral, and his wife Annemarie.

The fifteenth-century cathedral in the small town of Laucha, near Freyburg, was rarely used by the townspeople. At best only thirty persons, mostly old women, gathered in the cavernous sanctuary for Sunday services. The Müllers invited the people of the neighboring towns and villages to Laucha, suggesting that a session be held in the cathedral. At eight o'clock on the evening of 22 October 1989, the church's pews were filled to capacity – the first time the pastor and his wife had ever seen the sanctuary full. Notice had spread by word of mouth. Despite the fact that calling for any discussion of social or political problems was an act of sedition, a month

173. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 46.
174. Ibid., p. 47.
175. Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990*, op. cit., pp. 218–31.

earlier Annemarie had circulated leaflets, mimeographed on seedy paper, announcing the establishment of a chapter of New Forum. When more than 600 townspeople arrived at the cathedral for the 22 October New Forum meeting, Pastor Müller made an astonishing request. He asked each speaker to identify himself or herself by name and place of residence. The pastor's invitation surprised those gathered, for congregations usually operated on the assumption that 'pastors always had tapped phones and spies in their congregations'.[176] The Stasi went to great lengths to monitor the activities of the churches.[177] As a result of Reverend Müller's request, person after person rose to express their anger and fears, and to denounce the communist government.

The format of the Laucha meeting was similar to the pattern of those that had been occurring for weeks in Leipzig, where it had become apparent that the GDR would not pulverize the popular demonstrations as originally expected. This night in Laucha, as on so many other evenings in towns and cities across the country, the clergy led the people by calling for rejection of violence and the maintenance of nonviolent discipline. When the session ended, the participants left the cathedral and walked through the village in a procession of candlelight, leaving their lighted tapers standing upright in drops of candle wax on the steps of the city hall. Annemarie Müller's revolution had brought what Darnton called 'fresh air instead of fear':

> No bloodshed, no storming of citadels, no transformation of a power structure. Its well-mannered demonstrations . . . make it look like a Lilliputian version of the great *Wende* that had swept through the rest of the country. Everything arrived in Laucha two or three weeks late. . . . Even communications from New Forum in Berlin were relayed in a haphazard manner by means of personal contacts. New Forum itself rejected everything that smacked of centralization. . . . It hardly had an organization at all. It merely provided an occasion for people like Annemarie Müller to find their voice.[178]

As with innumerable communities in East Germany, 'civic courage' had previously not been found in abundance in Laucha, and the orientation of life in all villages and towns was made secular by the communist government.[179] Yet, the Pastors' Movement made it possible for even the most timid citizens to feel comfortable in expressing their most ardent and long-suppressed hopes.

The Western news media magnified the phenomenon as they reported on East Germany's growing candlelit demonstrations. Their reportage further flamed street protests and stimulated more citizens to leave. The German

176. Ibid., p. 226.
177. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 36.
178. Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990*, op. cit., pp. 229–30, 231.
179. Ibid., pp. 221–4.

philosopher Jürgen Habermas suggests that pictures of demonstrating East Germans had an evolutionary effect because television had the capacity to transform a single demonstration into a pervasive and ubiquitous event.[180] Another shift occurring in East German society was reflected in the placards, banners and chants that proclaimed that the protesters were the people *(Wir sind das Volk)*. As the undertaking coalesced, the sloganeers broadened their meaning and announced that they – the peoples of the two Germanies – were one people *(Wir sind ein Volk)*.[181]

A Berlin Wall of the mind

The Pastors' Movement exemplifies the effects of moral or political jiu-jitsu. When the guns of the East German Government were aimed at unarmed protesters and elicited no violent reaction – only sputtering candles – the regime was unsure of how to respond. Armed soldiers and police doubtless felt stirrings of identification with the nonviolent protagonists, perhaps identifying with the jeopardy faced by the protesters at the end of their guns. The leadership offered by the ministers, and the staunch nonviolent discipline of the resisters, threw the regime off balance when its totalitarianism succeeded in provoking nothing but more nonviolence; the more the government used force, the more the nonviolent opposition maintained discipline. As the police faced protesters in Leipzig and elsewhere, their confusion grew as their power was drained from them. The number of nonviolent demonstrators continued to swell as they gained self-assurance, so that somewhere between half a million and one million persons gathered in the streets of East Berlin on 4 November 1989.

As fear of repression receded from the ever-growing numbers of demonstrators, their slogans reflected a subtle shift in attitude. Placards and chants changed from 'We want to leave' to 'We are staying here'. One banner bespoke more than its few words: 'As we demonstrate today, so shall we live tomorrow.' Personal transformation and inner change, rather than anything in the external circumstances, were igniting the people to assert themselves. Jarausch described this renaissance when he said that the 'recovery of personal self-respect propelled the democratic awakening and broke the spell of SED repression'.[182] Thousands who had previously silenced their feelings of dread began to voice their wants and – importantly in the context of nonviolent struggle – their willingness to sacrifice for those desires. The sight of hundreds of thousands of citizens peacefully seeking the most basic human rights was reminiscent of the movement that transformed the American South: 'Potentially violent crowds were proceeding silently, in

180. Cited in Bleiker, *Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany*, op. cit., p. 51 note 71.

181. Holst, *Civilian-Based Defense in a New Era*, op. cit., p. 18.

182. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., pp. 46, 50.

self-imposed order, holding candles in their hands. . . . The non-violent methods borrowed from the US civil rights movement and the goals of achieving human rights created instant sympathy for the Bürgerbewegung [citizens' movement] abroad.'[183]

Resignations of SED government figures during the autumn of 1989 were followed by the stepping down of the entire government under Willi Stoph on 7 November. After hundreds of thousands of protesters formed a nonviolent human chain across East Germany, the entire Politburo and Central Committee resigned. On 9 November, a spokesperson for the government declared that all East German citizens could travel abroad at will and without official permission. That night, thousands climbed over the Berlin Wall, by then the object of almost round-the-clock vigils. A story is told of a man who left East Berlin in November 1989 and went, via the West German embassy in Prague, to Hungary and Austria and on to West Germany, where he then took a flight to West Berlin, exactly in time to see the Berlin Wall opened. Had he waited, he could have arrived at the same destination, but a few miles away, by foot.[184]

As the Pastors' Movement sustained the East German street demonstrations, the government disintegrated. The SED agreed to change its name and break with its Stalinist past on 16 December, its force spent and its legitimacy vitiated. On 30 January 1990, Moscow agreed to the reunification of the two Germanies. The first free East German parliamentary elections (*Volkskammerwahlen)* took place on 16 March 1990, with a voter turnout of more than 93 percent. Virtually all of the demands of the nonviolent protagonists who had poured out of the Nikolai Church every Monday after peace prayers had been met by the time spring blossomed in 1990. By the summer of 1990, the West German Deutschmark had been introduced into East Germany. On 3 October 1990, the unification of the two Germanies was completed through the annexation of the GDR by the Federal Republic. A national festival celebrated the reunion. In what had formerly been West Germany, Roman Catholic bishop Karl Lehmann challenged the political leaders of the newly reunified country during a thanksgiving service in Munich's Marienkirche: 'Now that the wall of stone has tumbled, the barrier in our heads must also come down.'[185]

A transition had been made from fear and obsequiousness toward those possessing official power to popular empowerment. Nonviolent struggle abetted the democratic awakening. When the Brandenburg Gate had been physically crashed, a more significant Berlin Wall of the mind had also been scaled. Ahead lay the more complex matter of national unification.

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183. Ibid., p. 49.

184. Roberts, *Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions*, op. cit., p. 41 note 40.

185. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, op. cit., p. 178.

The Czechs and Slovaks: a 'Velvet Revolution'

This was a rebellion of truth against lies, of purities against impurities, of the human heart against violence.
Václav Havel[186]

A tradition of bloodless revolution

The Czechoslovakian struggle for personal freedoms and self-government, realized as a result of the 1989 Velvet Revolution, was rooted in history. The Czechs and Slovaks, two closely related peoples, had tried since the seventeenth century fully to blend into the monarchies that governed them, although they each longed for independence. Despite constitutional protections and amendments that guaranteed their rights to political participation, the efforts of the Czechs and the Slovaks to feel at home with their rulers were frustrated. Lacking other alternatives, both ethnic groups accepted their status as subjects of foreign monarchies. The First World War offered a glimmer of hope that independence could be achieved, and it finally came in 1918, not as the fruit of their struggles but as a byproduct of the war. The two peoples who had so long sought autonomy were joined together as one nation in Czechoslovakia. Bohemia, with its Czech population, formed the western section, Moravia occupied the center, and Slovakia lay to the east. The unification of the Czechs and Slovaks was warmly received by both peoples as a step forward, and the bloodless transition to independence was seen as the first 'Velvet Revolution' to be experienced by these two nations in the course of the twentieth century.[187] This peaceful transformation was part of a pattern that was repeated again and again in the region.

Although Czechoslovakia's independence seemed in danger of demise periodically after 1918, the country always presented a unified front and managed to fend off its predators. With the onset of the Second World War and the invasion of Nazi troops, freedom was lost to the advancing Germans. The liberation of the country by Soviet forces in 1944 enhanced the standing of the small Communist Party, setting back other parties. The communists were thus able to stage a bloodless coup d'état and seize power in February 1948. The icy winds of the cold war blew across Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union began to flex its military muscle. Stalin – the all-powerful, ruthless communist marshal of the Soviet Union – insisted that Czechoslovakia be brought completely within the communist sphere by first forming and then enforcing a totalitarian system of government in this small country. All remnants of democracy were crushed. The economy, the

186. Michael Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Václav Havel* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 189.

187. John F. N. Bradley, *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution: A Political Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. ix.

environment and virtually all other aspects of Czechoslovakian life were mismanaged, almost to the point of destruction. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands were imprisoned in a government effort to crush all internal opposition to the communist regime and its failing economic policies.[188] Under the constant threat of mass terror and Soviet military intervention, Czechoslovakians were subdued into relinquishing their prized independence.

Yet, there were cracks in the communist front, and the overwhelming desire for freedom on the part of the Czechoslovakian people was never completely suppressed. From the late 1950s onward, the Communist Party lacked unity. Splitting into factions, some announced an aversion to orthodox Stalinist economics, while others took a harder line. The atmosphere of the nation changed as students and intellectuals began to publicly voice their concerns and as party members became more disaffected with Antonin Novotny, the Czechoslovakian who became communist leader in 1957. Novotny was soon left with no allies as his fellow communists joined rival factions. Student unrest climaxed in late 1967 as young Czechs and Slovaks took to the streets and were brutally repressed by Novotny. The communist leader paid dearly for his reaction; he was quickly replaced. His party comrades offered no support, eager to see him, and his policies, go.

The Prague Spring

In January 1968, Novotny was replaced by Alexander Dubcek. While Dubcek had few significant ideas for improving the leadership of Czechoslovakia, he did recognize the benefits of reform. In a political maneuver encouraged by revelations of Soviet leader Nikita Khruschev about the abuses of the Stalin era, Dubcek actively encouraged public opinion against the strict, Stalinist party apparatus and its policies. He came to be viewed as the leader who gave socialism a human face, as he eagerly exploited what he considered the liberal leanings in Czechoslovakia's Communist Party.[189] He went so far as to experiment with a free-market economy.

Many in Czechoslovakia, especially the intellectuals, were eager to accept Dubcek's reforms and believe his promises. Energies were thrown into efforts to support liberalized policy reforms and revisions. Endeavors by citizens, academics and artists were soon actively challenging the government, outpacing it in the speed of proposed reforms. A petition, known as '2,000 Words', was circulated, calling for stepped-up efforts to rid the government of its Stalinist attributes. Reforms were often formally instituted by officials only after they realized the people had already put them into practice. One of the more striking examples occurred when a

188. Ibid., p. xvi.
189. Ibid., p. xvii.

government endorsement of a more open media came only after the leadership realized that the press was already operating under a policy of free and open communication.[190] Intellectuals and students steered efforts to inform the public of the new freedoms, thus inspiring further change. The heady time of alteration and liberalization in 1968 became known as the 'Prague Spring'.

While Dubcek made himself a symbol for change and liberalism in the minds of the people of Czechoslovakia, truly he was neither its propeller nor its controller, and he soon lost control. Dubcek had tried to present the reforms to the watchful Soviets as a variation of communism, but the Soviet leadership, hearing reports of chaos and democratic amendments, did not believe him. During the summer of 1968, the decision was made in Moscow to stop Dubcek and his reform-minded citizens; the force with which to do so was provided by the Brezhnev Doctrine. The Czechoslovak leadership, hearing of the impending invasion justified by this dogma, was quick to condemn the planned takeover.

Falling back on their history of bloodless revolutions, the Czechs and Slovaks chose to resist without resorting to violence. When the tanks of the five Warsaw Pact countries finally arrived, on 21 August 1968, they were greeted with peaceful demonstrations by Czechoslovakians. 'One of the most amazing factors in Czechoslovakia after the night invasion . . . was the spontaneous introduction of passive resistance by the entire population, which assumed the character and had the effect of unarmed combat on a nationwide scale', said Josef Jøsten, a noted journalist and writer of Czech origin, recalling the stunning nature of the people's response to the assault.[191] Czech troops, along with their own people, participated in resisting the invaders. When ordered out of their barracks to make room for the occupying troops, Czech soldiers additionally removed windows and doors, disengaged electrical systems, and cut off water lines, making the barracks nearly uninhabitable for the new arrivals.[192] In Prague, students surrounded Soviet tanks and offered gestures of peace. Leaflets were distributed to citizens encouraging peaceful nonviolent resistance, while the occupying soldiers were asked to search their hearts for mercy and understanding.[193]

The soldiers from the Warsaw Pact were confused and thrown off balance by the absence of hostility. Before long, the troops in Prague were made undependable by the mental strain and confusion. The regiments started to alternate the time spent on duty in Prague, leaving every four

190. Ibid., p. xviii.
191. Josef Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77 – A Record of Passive Resistance', *Conflict Studies,* Vol. 86 (August 1977), p. 4.
192. Ibid., p. 13.
193. Ibid., p. 6.

days to escape the pressures of the nonviolent resistance.[194] As the resistance spread across Czechoslovakia, the soldiers had to be rotated in and out of other cities and regions as well. Factory workers reported for an extra shift of work, on the first Sunday of the occupation, 25 August, and called it 'Dubcek's Sunday' in a rare form of economic intervention known as a reverse strike. They reasoned that a normal strike would have damaged their own country and not the occupiers.[195] Ingenious resistance methods quickly developed in other cities and regions of Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovakian season of hope officially ended as the architects of the country's democratic reforms were forcibly flown to Moscow and obliged to sign the Moscow Protocols, recognizing their acceptance of the invasion and the Soviet presence. Their reforms were rescinded, and communist hard-liners were installed in the Czechoslovakian leadership.[196] On 16 January 1969, a student at Charles University, Jan Palach, committed suicide by self-immolation in the middle of Prague's Wenceslas Square. Situated in the center of Prague, the square is named for the tenth-century King Wenceslas, a patron saint of Bohemia, the ancient kingdom and seat of learning that today is in the central and western portion of the Czech Republic. Because it occurred in Wenceslas Square, Palach's fiery death could not be missed. In taking his own life, Palach wanted to make a horrific protest and send a fervent message against the continued replacement of reformers in the government with reactionaries.[197] Large demonstrations erupted. Citing such protests as proof of Dubcek's inability to rule effectively, the Soviet leadership forced him to resign on 17 April 1969. He was replaced by Gustáv Husák. Czechoslovakia underwent a rigid program of 'normalization', a euphemism for bringing the country totally under Soviet communist control.

'The critical voices'

Despite Husák's efforts to halt the reform movement, small groups continued to work clandestinely for peaceful change. Such endeavors often appeared ineffectual because of the relatively small number of citizens involved, the immediate arrest of organizational leaders and constant surveillance by Husák's

194. Sharp, 'Nonviolent Struggle: An Effective Alternative', op. cit., p. 121.

195. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action,* Vol. 2: *The Methods of Nonviolent Action*, op. cit., p. 402. The doing of work – illegally – as a form of protest was perfected by Danilo Dolci in Sicily, Italy, in 1955. A road was badly needed, yet no funds were allocated by the government, and building the road was prohibited. Dolci organized the area's unemployed laborers to construct the road without compensation. A court case eventuated, Dolci was vindicated, and the workers were paid. See Danilo Dolci, *Outlaws of Partinico*, trans. by R. Munro (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960).

196. Tim D. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989: A Chronological Commentary', in Tim D. Whipple (ed.), *After the Velvet Revolution: Václav Havel and the Leaders of Czechoslovakia Speak Out* (New York: Freedom House, 1991), p. 5.

197. Ibid., pp. 5–6.

security forces. Yet the reformers' messages continued to gain credence. Many of those fomenting disapproval of Husák's repression were intellectuals – writers, poets, artists and students who were subsequently to be punished. The government attacked the instigators of reform by confiscating their property, making it illegal for their work to be published or shown and by eliminating the organizations that nourished them. All activity, however, was not stopped; the rebellion was never completely broken. Its flame was fanned by the constrictive regime and its prohibitions on the freedoms of speech and association, and by the government's placing of cultural and social activities under the strictest of official censorship. The authorities were not able to silence all of 'the critical voices'.[198]

One measure of dissent was the adoption of the 'Ten Points Manifesto', of 21 August 1969, the one-year anniversary of the Soviet-led invasion. The document was actually a noncooperation program in which there was to be no use of public transportation and no shopping. People were asked to not patronize restaurants or theaters. Work was to stop at noon. Monuments and graves were to be decorated. Most importantly, there was a plea to spread the message of nonviolent resistance to repression throughout the country and beyond its borders.[199] Preventive arrests and repressive measures begun on 20 August did not stop an impressive showing by the populace when the plan was put into action the following day, to commemorate the 'Day of Shame', as it was referred to in the manifesto.

As in past centuries in different parts of the world, some Czechoslovakians began to express their opposition through the timeworn technique of fleeing their homeland. More than 150,000 citizens fled the country after 1968.[200] As if from a cornucopia of diverse methods of nonviolent direct action, resourceful and innovative measures poured out of the popular imagination, their impact heightened by the stampede of those taking flight, or *hijra*.

The predominantly Roman Catholic population gathered in places of worship and at religious functions to share their collective desire for change and to circulate bulletins about venturesome yet nonviolent ways to resist the bureaucracy.[201] In the clasp of faith, even the more reserved members of the community found the resolve to take action, without fear, against the government's repressive measures. To their political program for nonviolent reform was added the idea of Christian-based compassion.[202]

198. Janusz Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent* (New York/Westport/London: Praeger, 1987), p. 10 (Washington Papers 125).
199. Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77', op. cit., p. 10.
200. Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*, op. cit., p. 5.
201. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 154.
202. Yitzhak Klein, 'Ideas Igniting the East European Revolution', *Jerusalem Post*, 27 April 1990.

Position papers and manifestoes were plastered on walls. These in turn were copied or memorized by citizens for transmission to other areas of the country.[203] The growing number of unlawful printing presses and publications stimulated fearlessness on the part of the populace. Clandestine publishing houses and underground journals flourished; information from underground channels put communication beyond the realm of government censorship. Such unofficial publications, known as *samizdat*, became part of Czechoslovakian history after the country fell under Soviet domination in 1948. These publications included letters, appeals, books, periodicals, editorials and summaries detailing instances of government persecution.[204] Efforts were also focused on disseminating information to an international audience, with the hope that world attention would accelerate reform. Meanwhile, as a result of a popular strategy, government officials were bogged down, having to read an endless flow of letters of protest sent by citizens.[205] The *samizdat* would ultimately serve as vital links between various reform movements throughout eastern Central Europe.

Along with the eyes, the ears were important receptors. Musicians, radio, unauthorized rock bands, performers, entertainers and artists played a vital and impressive role.[206] Throughout the early 1970s, it seemed as if an agreement of sorts had been reached between the government and the people. In essence, the government asked for conformist behavior and non-participation in politics and in return offered state-subsidized comforts.[207] While some accepted out of fear or need, a significant and solid community of resistance remained apart. Traditions of nonviolent action, having been forged over time, would not easily dissipate but, rather, would hasten to emerge with renewed strength over and over in the coming decades.

In 1975 Czechoslovakia signed the Helsinki Final Act of what became the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). All of Eastern and Western Europe (except Albania), as well as Canada and the United States, had gathered to discuss four 'baskets' of concern: security affairs; economic, scientific and environmental issues; humanitarian and human rights concerns; and follow ups. The Soviet Union was chiefly interested in obtaining guarantees of the borders resulting from its post-Second World War hegemony. In return, the United States and its Western allies wanted respect for human rights, freedom of travel, and increased contacts and flow of information. The Final Act reflected both interests and, in a sense, defined the formal end to the Second World War. It was signed on 1 August 1975, soon becoming known as the 'Helsinki Accords'.

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203. Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77', op. cit., p. 11.
204. Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*, op. cit., p. 9.
205. Ibid.
206. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 154.
207. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 6.

The official formation of the CSCE (later the OSCE, or Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) committed all of the signers to the recognition of and respect for human rights and basic freedoms. In short order, the human rights basket supplanted the others, and the Helsinki Accords became synonymous with human rights, so much so that the phrase eventually supplanted the term *civil rights* in common parlance. While not part of a binding treaty, the human rights principles outlined in the agreement automatically were incorporated into the laws of the signatory nations, and, in theory, participating governments committed themselves to following its terms. In Czechoslovakia, however, the process of 'normalization' proceeded with its implicit rejection of the Helsinki tenets.

Václav Havel – playwright, actor and a man who would play a significant role in the history of his nation – became one of the first persons openly to voice his refusal to conform and to express concern over his government's flagrant disregard of the principles that would be outlined in the Helsinki Accords. On 8 April 1975, Havel expressed his conviction that 'we cannot remain silent in the face of evil or violence; silence merely encourages them'.[208] He broke the quietude when he sent an 'Open Letter to Gustáv Husák', in which he protested the effects of 'normalization'. As the contents of the letter became known by way of underground publication, waves of dissent, followed by repression, soon began anew. Moves to suppress youth and cultural activities sparked petitions, and dissident groups began rapidly to form throughout 1976.[209] Ultimately, the young playwright would assume a pivotal role in rejuvenating the nation's resistance to oppression and violence.

Charter 77

On New Year's Day 1977, a document was released that contained the signatures of more than 200 citizens.[210] Its originators included leaders from the Prague Spring, professors, engineers, journalists, artists and clergy, plus the author of the 'Open Letter', Václav Havel. Charter 77, as the entity came to be known, was inspired by the Helsinki treaties and guided by the need to confirm the essential rights of human beings. Among these entitlements was the right to a dialogue with one's government. Considered the most significant development since the Prague Spring, Charter 77 reinforced 'the fact that the Soviet-imposed system of government . . . has no social mandate'.[211] Its basic principle was that society cannot be transformed by orders from above. The writers, actors and intellectuals

208. Václav Havel, *Summer Meditations on Politics, Morality and Civility in a Time of Transition*, trans. by Paul Wilson (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p. 98.
209. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 7.
210. Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77', op. cit., p. 1.
211. Ibid., p. 2; Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*, op. cit., p. 2.

involved held the strong conviction that change must originate from below. The signers judged that the convictions of the people were the only means of defense against totalitarian power and conformity. They believed that people normally first form associations on a cultural plane and that in the context of imagination and art human beings can create political pressure as a result of innermost need. Charter 77 was not an organization, and there was no official membership.[212] While it was not created to play the role of a political opposition, it had a significant political impact, as noted by Janusz Bugajski, a noted political science researcher and analyst:

> Charter 77 . . . has not posed a direct political challenge to the Czechoslovak regime. Nevertheless, as an essential ingredient of an authentic campaign for fundamental political, civil, economic, cultural, and national rights, the Charter's existence undermines the principles of the totalitarian communist system.[213]

Charter 77 could not be characterized as a mass movement, although its presence, influence and activities kindled the sparks of a mass movement. Its potency was irrefutable.

The late 1970s betokened a time of hope and innovation for dissident communities in Czechoslovakia. Another group was formed that rebelled against the government, the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted, more commonly referred to by its Czech acronym VONS. It was founded on 27 April 1978. Like Poland's Committee for the Workers' Defense, a group with similar inspiration, VONS focused on cases of injustice and provided documentation and advice to individuals.[214] Representatives of KOR and Charter 77 held clandestine meetings on the frontier between their two countries during August and September 1978 to exchange ideas and experiences. The Roman Catholic Church, known as the 'underground' or 'catacomb' church, began voicing its concern for human rights. When the Polish archbishop of Krakow, Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, was made pope and took the name John Paul II on 22 October 1978, he provided encouragement to all Eastern European nations to resist communism, not solely Poland. The energizing regional impact of the Slavonic pope's message was evident as, in early 1985, 30,000 Czechs signed a petition inviting the pope to visit them.[215]

The Czechoslovak Government remained intransigent. Although the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev had taken the helm of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, communist leaders in Czechoslovakia were hesitant to instate the changes suggested by him because they were convinced that repudiation of the past would represent a rejection of themselves; this

212. Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77', op. cit., p. 2.
213. Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*, op. cit., p. 1.
214. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., pp. 7–8.
215. Bugajski, *Czechoslovakia: Charter 77's Decade of Dissent*, op. cit., pp. 62–3.

time, there would be no Stalin to blame. By accepting reforms, they feared that they would be accepting responsibility for chaos and their own nullification.[216] At the popular level, however, great advantage was taken of the spirit of reform emanating from the Soviet Union; indeed, the uncertainties and division of opinion in Moscow were seized upon as opportunities in Prague and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Six years after their first meeting along the frontier, the gathering of Polish and Czechoslovakian resisters formed Friends of Czechoslovak–Polish Solidarity. A number of Czechoslovakians also founded the Democratic Initiative.[217]

Milos Jakes was called upon to replace Husák as general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in an effort to subdue the rising voices of dissent, although Husák would retain his post of president. Jakes ignored calls from Gorbachev for reform.[218] His maintenance of 'normalization' led to spontaneous protests on 16 January 1989, the twentieth anniversary of the self-immolation of Jan Palach. The activities lasted for six days. The government responded with harsh measures, including the use of batons and gas. As a result of the demonstrations, legislation was enacted to increase the penalties for disturbing the peace. Dissidents as well as official figures signed petitions to protest police brutality.[219] Concurrent with the increasingly volatile political atmosphere, the economy and government industries had begun to decline and started to fail. Although the government sought to maintain its policy of keeping businesses afloat, most citizens recognized the diminishing benefits of the communist regime.

To address the urgent need for change within the government's political and economic structures, a new group emerged, Obroda (Revival), also known as the 'Club for Socialist Restructuring'. Having surfaced in February 1989, the association was composed of officials who had been active during the Prague Spring. Still communists, they fully supported Gorbachev's liberalism, and the group was soon leading the call for reform in Czechoslovakia. They spread their ideas and pleaded their point of view through the journal *Dialog 89*.[220]

Changes were meanwhile advancing rapidly throughout Eastern Europe: Solidarity had been granted legal status in Poland; socialists everywhere were calling for more freedoms; and Hungary had dismantled the electrified fence on its border with Austria, flinging open the doors for thousands to flee to the West. Despite the changes taking place around it,

216. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 9.
217. Ibid., p. 10.
218. Ibid.
219. Ibid., pp. 11–12.
220. Ibid., p. 12.

the Czechoslovak Government maintained its hard line. It went so far as to congratulate China for its nefarious crackdown on the nonviolent student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. In neighboring Poland, Solidarity beat the communists in semi-democratic elections.

Tension was growing as news spread that rapid change was occurring throughout the rest of Eastern Europe, yet somehow missing Czechoslovakia. In June 1989, a document appeared that was modestly called 'A Few Sentences'. This statement, originally signed by both official and unofficial artists who were calling for democratization, was within a few months signed by more than 40,000 citizens. The power of intellectual insurgency was disclosed when, on 11 August, the authorities rejected any dialogue with groups advocating change, minimizing them as 'illegal structures'.[221] By late August 1989, as government officials continued to reject demands for change, 30 percent of Czechoslovakian industries were moving toward collapse. Sites were recommended to be closed.[222] The government found itself unable to hold up its end of the bargain in which popular cooperation and acceptance were swapped for governmental subsidies and comforts.

The movement to speak out was gaining in popularity. Artists who had signed 'A Few Sentences' were joined by journalists in a boycott of Czechoslovakian television to protest the continued persecution of the document's signers. On 28 October, the anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic, the streets of Prague filled with citizens demonstrating for rights and democracy. In addition to political goals, thousands of citizens were also anxious to protest the serious environmental degradation caused by the rampant dumping of industrial waste in rivers and streams, air pollution, unregulated ecological destruction and policies that neglected natural resources.[223]

During the autumn of 1989, change swept through the rest of the Soviet satellite states. In late September 1989, Hungary's parliament issued an *ex post facto* condemnation of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact. On 4 November, Berlin was packed with more than a million demonstrators, as the East German Politburo resigned, along with hundreds of other officials; elections were planned. Two days later, Hungarian television aired an interview with Václav Havel in which he aligned himself with the popular cause, the televised discourse being immediately denounced by the Czechoslovak Government. By mid-November in Prague, Democratic Initiative declared itself the first independent political party to have been established since 1948.

221. Ibid., p. 13.
222. Ibid.
223. Ibid., pp. 13–14.

'We are against violence and do not seek revenge'

The beginning of the second 'Velvet Revolution' can be marked as 17 November 1989, when a Prague demonstration condemning the Nazi occupation and its resulting deaths turned into the largest demonstration known in Czechoslovakian history. The event was peaceful, as the people rallied for democracy, and participants carried flowers, held candles and waved flags in Wenceslas Square, which filled with good-natured students.[224] The calm was broken as police ensnared 100,000 demonstrators, boxing them in. The demonstrators cried out, 'we are unarmed', and 'no violence'.[225] Hundreds were injured when the security forces charged the crowd. In that moment, the people became bound together in shared outrage against violence. So appalled were ordinary private citizens by the attack that many who had been previously fearful were moved to show their disavowal of the brutality by joining the resistance.[226] Feelings of fear dissipated, and the government's violence was protested anew with boycotts and strikes. Thousands more gathered peacefully in Wenceslas Square. Marchers confronted by riot police sat down on the cobblestones and sang nursery rhymes.[227] The readiness for violent retaliation by watchful troops appeared strikingly out of place to bystanders. Men and women gathered around newly erected, makeshift shrines to the injured, posies in hand, while the soldiers, in contrast, looked preposterous as they destroyed candle-lit shrines and stomped on bouquets.[228] This strange dance between the nonviolent minglers and armed troops lasted for more than five days.

Václav Havel spoke to those gathered in the square and begged them not to use violence. His credentials as a leader and statesman were growing. To his refusal to be cowed by the authorities had been added time spent in prison, the prolific crafting of political tracts and, now, his skills as an orator. The Civic Forum, established on 19 November 1989, backed up the call made by Havel. The new organization, which was composed of all the opposition groups, students, artists and a variety of socialist political parties, issued a statement on 23 November outlining a renewed commitment to the tradition that had been passed down from earlier generations: 'We are against violence and do not seek revenge.'[229] These were not merely the words of a few intellectuals. Havel acknowledged the contributions of the student community:

> Our gratitude goes to the students for giving this revolution a beautifully peaceful, dignified, gentle and I would say loving face, which is admired by the whole world.

224. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 169.
225. Bradley, *Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution*, op. cit., p. 67.
226. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 179.
227. Ibid., p. 183.
228. Ibid., p. 181.
229. Ibid., p. 185.

This was a rebellion of truth against lies, of purities against impurities, of the human heart against violence.[230]

One young man, a 25-year-old teacher, noted with great pride and excitement, 'Gandhi would have been proud of us.'[231] The people of Czechoslovakia were enacting the power of Truth, as Gandhi had defined it and as Havel reinterpreted it, as 'living in truth'. Havel had chosen this as his motif, having early in his youth rejected automatic subservience to those in authority and instead determining to search for truth in forbidden books and thoughts.[232] When Havel spoke of Truth, he did not mean an abstraction:

[Truth] can be any means by which a person or a group revolts against manipulation: anything from a letter by intellectuals to a workers' strike, from a rock concert to a student demonstration, from refusing to vote in the farcical elections, to making an open speech at some official congress, or even a hunger strike.[233]

The truth-based demonstrations that started in Prague quickly spread across the nation. Public Against Violence, a group similar to the Civic Forum, was created in Bratislava on 20 November to help extend the news of a peaceful revolution and circulate the *samizdat*. Strike committees and representatives from the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence began going to factories, traveling to towns and visiting schools to convey their concerns and instruct people on what could be done to express nonviolently their disenchantment with the government.[234]

The communist regime preferred to act as if everything were under control. Promises of normalization were repeated. The news media, which had previously obediently toed the government line, instead came out with a condemnation of the violence that had occurred on 17 November. On 21 November 1989, four days after the initial demonstration, more than 200,000 people gathered in Wenceslas Square. Václav Havel again addressed the crowd. He promised the listening authorities that a general strike would take place the following week, on 27 November, unless the violence of the preceding days was put under investigation, prisoners of conscience were released and freedoms of the press and information were guaranteed.[235] On 22 November, protests continued as students encircled the statue of King

230. Ibid., p. 189.
231. Ibid., p. 187.
232. Eda Kriseová, *Václav Havel: The Authorized Biography*, trans. by Caleb Crain (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), p. 18.
233. Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in John Keane (ed.), *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), p. 43.
234. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 15.
235. Ibid.

Wenceslas presiding over the square. Alexander Dubcek appeared at a rally in Bratislava to make his first public speech in twenty years. Demonstrations continued throughout the following days. Workers added their support to the growing cause.

The jangling keys and tinkling bells of truth

Students had begun meeting with actors in Prague's Realistic Theatre on 18 November. The theatrical community quickly decided that it could help to expand the techniques and numbers involved in the burgeoning nonviolent resistance. A plan was developed for a boycott, and theaters were rapidly converted into hubs for energetic political thought and discussion.[236] The Civic Forum took the lead, and the Magic Lantern Theatre served as its headquarters.

Television employees began to protest against the biased coverage the demonstrations were receiving and, thus, broadcasters were able to put the first images of Prague demonstrations on the air. This development would prove crucial, as it had in East Germany, by enabling thousands of Czechoslovakian citizens to see what was happening in their own country. Still more were inspired to add their voices to the peaceful insurrection.

Protests and participants grew daily. The resignation of Jakes headed the list of demands. Police forces always surrounded the increasing number of rallies, yet they were always careful to let the demonstrations continue. On 24 November, Jakes was dismissed, but the regime's willingness to make changes stopped there. A hard-liner named Karel Urbánek was made general secretary. The appeal of the protests widened as the country's sportsmen and women joined boycotts and strikes, refusing to participate in competitions. On 25 November, Czechoslovakia celebrated the canonization of Agnes Premyslid, another patron saint of Bohemia. As pilgrims trekked from all over Czechoslovakia to be present at the Prague ceremony, thousands more watched the televised broadcast from their homes.

Following the ceremony, 750,000 people gathered on Prague's Letná Plain. Once again, Václav Havel listed the people's demands. Confronted by an overwhelming gathering, Urbánek finally announced that the government was ready to talk. In the wake of this concession, a few reactionaries in the party resigned from their positions. On 26 November at Prague's city hall, a government delegation led by Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec met with Civic Forum representatives led by Havel. Further talks were agreed upon. Some 500,000 Czechoslovakians gathered on Letná Plain, as Adamec promised to yield to the conditions 'within our competence'.[237] An atmosphere of joy and celebration prevailed, as a human chain,

236. Ibid.
237. Ibid., p. 17.

reminiscent of the one constructed in East Germany just days earlier, was formed stretching from the plain to Prague Castle. More and more people physically put themselves to the test, determined to see that promises were not again broken.

By this time, approximately 6,000 strike committees had been formed. The Civic Forum adopted the What We Want program, which asked for civil rights, an independent judiciary, political pluralism, economic reform and changes in the country's environmental and foreign policies. The strike planned for 27 November went into effect, lasting from noon until two o'clock. The immense industrial strike attested to the absence of any gap between groups or classes; there were no breaches between workers and intellectuals or students and artists. Nor was the revolution confined to Prague. Towns and villages joined in the actions, after students from the capital traveled to country hamlets bringing news of the growing upheaval.[238] As students teamed up with citizens from a patchwork of backgrounds, in remote neighborhoods the protesters were transformed from seemingly powerless individuals into a solid mass movement, one capable of altering the future of Czechoslovakia. The citizens held staunchly to the commitment to use nonviolent direct action. The peaceful crowds, holding nothing but candles and flowers, were met by battalions of police wielding truncheons.[239] For some, as in all struggles, nonviolent resistance was merely the most practical approach, because they could not match the firepower of the authorities. Yet it was also an ethical choice. It was recognition of the significant relationship between the goal of a process and how that goal is achieved.[240]

Four-fifths of the labor force participated in the strike. Town squares across the country filled as the strikers gathered. Ringing bells, jangling keys, honking horns and blaring sirens, they celebrated their unified action. Confident from the show of support represented by the strike, the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence increased their demands, asking for full political pluralism and representation in a new government. On 27 November, the Ministry of Culture released books and films that had been banned over the years for political reasons.[241] In this newfound spirit of openness, and with the people's realization that they wielded the power to transform their nation, a slogan was popularized that would be chanted throughout the rest of the revolution: 'Truth Shall Prevail.'[242]

Adamec assured the Civic Forum that the party's monopoly would be abolished and that he would present a compromise to the people no

238. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 188.
239. Timothy Garton Ash, 'Eastern Europe: The Year of Truth', *New York Review of Books*, 15 February 1990, p. 18.
240. Ibid., p. 19.
241. Ibid.
242. Ibid., p. 18.

later than 3 December 1989. On 29 November, the article of the constitution that mandated a monopoly role for the Communist Party was formally rescinded. At the same time, negotiations began over controls for various agencies and other more detailed matters.[243] A commission was created to investigate the violence that had erupted during the rally on 17 November. Adamec offered to talk with Soviet authorities to discuss the withdrawal of their forces from Czechoslovakian territory. The Civic Forum led a delegation in primary discourse with the Communist Party leadership, and Public Against Violence met with the government of the Slovak leadership.

A hurdle was overcome on 1 December when the Czech Communist Party Central Committee secretary, Vasil Mohorita, admitted that the invasion of 1968 was 'a mistake'.[244] Unfortunately, talks stalled on 5 December after Adamec suggested a new government, with three-fourths of it to remain communist. The Civic Forum and Public Against Violence rejected the proposal and called for demonstrations and a general strike to be held on 11 December. Thousands gathered in Prague to protest Adamec's proposal as well as to show support for the strike. On the same day, the party leadership traveled to Moscow for a Warsaw Pact meeting, at which time the five countries participating in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia – Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union – issued a condemnation of this, their own action. A general strike was now announced for 12 December, rather than the previously scheduled 11 December. Student protesters showed their resolve early by sitting-in and refusing to leave university buildings.[245] Talks continued between the government and the opposition groups, but on 7 December, Prime Minister Adamec and his government resigned rather than meet the demands of the opposition. The next day, President Husák, acting from his position as head of state, granted amnesty to all political prisoners. The new prime minister, Marián Calfa, agreed to reopen talks. Progress was made and, on 10 December 1989 – International Human Rights Day – a 'government of national understanding' was announced. For the first time since 1948, the communists were no longer the sole governing party in Czechoslovakia.[246]

A new era of no retribution

People began to believe that the changes they had fought for were real and lasting. The citizens of Prague gathered in Wenceslas Square to celebrate their new government. Most groups called off their boycotts and strikes; only the students, still fearing residual communist strength, followed through with strikes. Prime Minister Calfa told of his intentions to lead in the

243. Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 18.
244. Ibid.
245. Ibid., p. 19.
246. Ibid.

transition of the country into a full market economy. More change was to come.

In order to adjust to the new environment, the Communist Party had to re-examine itself. A few days after the formation of the new government leadership, Defense Minister Miroslav Vacek announced that all Communist Party activities in the armed forces had been halted. The Communist Party held a conference at which the structure of the party was radically altered, and an announcement of its support for a multiparty system was made. The people's militia, a paramilitary arm of the party, was disbanded, and formal apologies were issued to the people of Czechoslovakia for the mistakes that had been made since 1968.[247]

Under intense pressure, some Federal Assembly parliamentarians resigned from their positions, making room for opposition representatives to join the national legislative body. The first gathering of the incoming parliament, on 28 December 1989, produced a new – yet not so new – chairman in Alexander Dubcek.[248] The assembly gathered on 29 December and unanimously elected Václav Havel president of the Czechoslovak Republic. Two months earlier he had been in prison, condemned as a dissident playwright.[249] Havel consistently pleaded that there should be no retribution, only reconciliation.[250] The new statesman recognized that the revolution's end would evoke feelings of joy, then crisis and, only afterward, catharsis. Havel believed that an essential part of the process necessary for rebuilding the country was to be truthful, to possess a willingness to forgive, to take personal responsibility and create an atmosphere of love.[251]

A difficult road lay ahead for the Czechs and Slovaks. Havel's pleas for reconciliation, morality and truth were not easily attainable. Executing a nonviolent revolution was demanding enough, but after all the joy and tears that went with freedom, the hard work of construction and reconstruction remained to be done. 'Before, it was very simple,' a childhood friend of Havel's noted. 'Differentiating between good and evil was much easier.'[252] By the end of his first year in office, the name of the country as a whole had been formally changed by law from Czechoslovakia to the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. Three years after Havel took office, in 1993, the Slovaks voted to secede. Havel thus became president of the Czech Republic.

The Czech and Slovak people have not been strangers to either

247. Ibid., p. 20.
248. Ibid.
249. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 194; Whipple, 'From 1968 to 1989', op. cit., p. 20.
250. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 192.
251. Ibid, pp. 200–1.
252. Ibid., p. 209.

Václav Havel addresses a mass meeting of an estimated 400,000 persons in Prague during the momentous month of November 1989.
(Photo: P. Vácha)

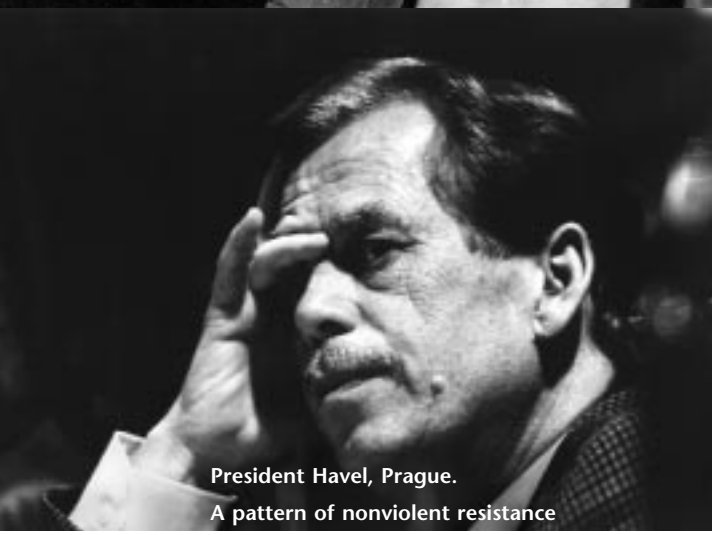
At the site where hundreds of students had been ambushed and beaten by security forces on 17 November 1989, Havel kneels one year later.
(Photo: P. Vácha)

Havel speaks to thousands gathered in 1990 to remember the 1969 self-immolation of Jan Palach, in the first public commemoration of Palach's death. Prior to that time, any recognition of his act (not considered a technique of nonviolent direct action) would have been unthinkable. Prague Castle is in the background.
(Photo: P. Vácha)

After what Havel had termed 'a rebellion of truth against lies, of purities against impurities, of the human heart against violence', Prague's streets were, by late December 1989, happy and peaceful.
(Photo: P. Vácha)

As president of the Czech Republic, Havel maintains informal relationships with artists, actors and authors, including some with whom he worked as a playwright during the 1970s and 1980s.
(Photo: K. Cudlín)

Having been in prison only two months earlier, on 29 December 1989 Havel was unanimously elected president of what was then the Czechoslovak Republic. Above, in 1990, he dances with students.
(Photo: K. Cudlín)



President Havel, Prague.
A pattern of nonviolent resistance to oppression can be discerned in a millennium of Czech and Slovak history. Much as Gandhi understood such struggle to be Truth, and King interpreted it as *agape* Love, Havel expressed it as 'living in truth'.
(Photo: P. Vácha)

drama or great history: for more than a thousand years, they had experienced empires and revolts, Nazism's depravity, Soviet hegemony and the excesses of various inexorable rulers. A strong tradition of protest runs through the annals of Czechoslovakia, and a pattern of nonviolent resistance to oppression emerges impressively from a millennium of history. While it may have taken years to reach the point of creating sustained mechanisms of mass nonviolent change, when it happened the popular adamancy against violence, and the fact that so few lives were lost, made it all the more gratifying. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 was the climax of a history and tradition that blended both the ethical and the practical.[253] There can be no question that nonviolent direct action, in the tradition of Gandhi and King, forged what Josef Jøsten referred to as 'a persistent and dynamic force in the country's life'.[254]

Václav Havel's truth

In 1979, Václav Havel was sentenced to four and a half years in prison. Having once hidden his manuscripts in a tree to evade confiscation by the state, Havel's writings and letters from jail became inspiration for dissidents throughout Eastern Europe. His major works include four complete plays and three one-act dramas. All of them are concerned with the explanations given by people who conform to a repressive status quo and are thus forced to reconcile, within themselves, their self-indulgent cooperation with a destructive order.[255] Havel often portrays people as cowed by fear and accepting what they know to be wrong and harmful. He has devoted his life to avoiding the trap of thinking that people are powerless against government forces. To that end, he has written influential essays on totalitarianism, dissent, the origins of power and, perhaps most significantly, on 'living in truth'.

For Havel, living in truth is about those who consider themselves powerless coming to understand their true might and acting upon it. Its opposite is to live within a lie, which is to stand in the midst of injustice and corruption and do nothing to change it, thus supporting the structure through silence.[256] To break away from living within a lie, one must be prepared to refuse to take part in systems that degrade humanity, to speak one's mind and to express one's commonality with others who are oppressed.[257] In this way, living in truth allows citizens to retrieve their

253. Joe Geshwiler, 'Czech's Havel Scripts a Heroic Exit', *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 23 July 1992, p. A14.
254. Jøsten, 'Czechoslovakia: From 1968 to Charter 77', op. cit., p. 1.
255. 'Václav Havel', in Charles Moritz (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1985* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1985), pp. 170–1.
256. Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, edited and trans. by Paul Wilson (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 123.
257. Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in *Living in Truth*, edited by Jan Vladislav (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), p. 55.

humanity and assume responsibility for their world.[258] It is also a weapon in the nonviolent repertoire; Havel explains that those who live in truth 'create a situation in which the regime is confounded, invariably causing panic and driving it to react in inappropriate ways'.[259] Havel often expresses his belief that the power inherent in living in truth, the power to upset oppressive power structures and tear at the seams of dictatorships, lies within each person. When individuals live in truth, he contends, they breathe more easily.

As an active member of the dissident community in Czechoslovakia, Havel seized what his biographer, Michael Simmons, terms 'an extraordinary opportunity to spell out the details of a new moral code of good social behaviour'.[260] Veering away from denouncing any particular form of government, he condemned the communist regime 'not because it was Communist, but because it was bad'.[261] Upon accepting an honorary doctorate from Toulouse University in 1984, he remarked that he favored politics 'as a practical morality, as service to the truth'.[262] Always linking the ethical and the practical, Havel wrote, 'It is my responsibility to emphasize, again and again, the moral origin of all genuine politics, to stress the significance of moral values and standards in all spheres of life.'[263] Communism, he asserted, 'was overthrown by life, by thought, by human dignity'.[264]

Three years of imprisonment and an even longer period of official castigation, censorship and banning had made him into a symbol for all people living under pitiless regimes. He deeply understood the importance of the news media and wrote tracts on political responsibility whenever he could, relying on the *samizdat* culture to spread his writings and ideas. Havel was consistently searched out by his fellow countrymen and women who, in the darkest hours of repression, felt the need for a leader of honor and honesty.[265] The depth of his probing is revealed by his acceptance of his punishment by the state as sacrifice, in the Gandhian and King-like sense.

The Dalai Lama – a proponent of nonviolence – remarked that Havel 'was one of the few world leaders . . . who remained completely devoted to peace, non-violence and moral responsibility'.[266] Václav Havel's life is proof of the power of ideas, and his movement, Charter 77, evidence of the power of revolutionary nonviolence.

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258. 'Introduction by Jan Vladislav: Asides to Readers of Havel's Essays', trans. by A. G. Brain, in Vladislav (ed.), *Living in Truth*, op. cit., p. xviii.
259. Havel, Vladislav (ed.) 'Power of the Powerless', op. cit., p. 58.
260. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. xii.
261. Ibid., p. 3.
262. Ibid., p. 155.
263. Havel, *Summer Meditations*, op. cit., p. 1.
264. Ibid., p. 5.
265. Simmons, *The Reluctant President*, op. cit., p. 171.
266. Ibid., p. 208.

Thailand: a transnational movement for democracy, human rights and nonviolence

Behind majesty and myth

Before there was 'Thailand', there was a country known as Siam – a land of majesty and myth. The military took over Thailand in 1932, ending the absolute Siamese monarchy and creating a constitutional monarchy that severely limited the powers of the royal family. Nonetheless, although legally circumscribed, the king still aroused and continues to arouse enormous admiration from the populace and can provide legitimacy (or deny it) for those in office.[267] Behind the glitter and pomp, despite the serenity and the languid pace, the Thai people have experienced a long history of violence and authoritarian rule as the military apparatus has hidden behind the moral authority of the monarchy. Thailand has always presented a friendly hand to other nations, and its respectable image has helped it to escape the harsh judgments expressed about other military regimes.[268]

Movements that champion democracy and human rights have come and gone in Thailand for years. Brutal military suppression, endorsed by unelected prime ministers who came to power through coups d'état, has consistently interfered with expressions of the populace's desire for a more just and democratic homeland. Out of ten eventful military coups, five were 'intended to overthrow civilian governments and dissolve parliament'.[269] Trapped in a cycle of coups, authoritarian rule, countermoves toward democracy and, finally, collapse – usually leading to yet another coup by the military forces – political stability has escaped the Thai people. The strength and unity of the military, the most structured interest in Thailand, have given it sufficient levers to overwhelm any civilian government whenever it chooses.[270] This cycle has hampered the development of civilian political parties and organizations. 'Political parties failed to organize, strengthen and develop in the way the military was able to do', and when civilian rule could not take hold, 'military coups became institutionalized', states Suchit Bunbongkarn, a noted expert on the Thai military.[271]

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267. See R. Sean Randolph and W. Scott Thompson, *Thai Insurgency: Contemporary Developments* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1981). While the endorsement of the king is extremely valuable, his powers are limited. He can sway opinion, but has little ability to mandate legal change.
268. Barbara Crossette, 'Thailand's Military Is Seen As Grasping Spoils of Power', *New York Times*, 19 May 1992, p. A10.
269. Yuli Ismartono, 'Thailand: The Vicious Cycle of Thai Politics', *InterPress Service*, 21 May 1992.
270. Ibid.
271. Ibid.

Sulak Sivaraksa's bookshop

At least one person has refused to accept the violence and authoritarian rule of the Thai military forces and has fought the explosion in Thai commercialism. For decades, Sulak Sivaraksa has presented to the citizens of Thailand a means for expressing their vision and hopes of a free, just and democratic nation. He has done so through his indefatigable lecturing and organizing of groups, bookstores, journals and printing presses, and has tried, similarly, to assist other peoples in South-East Asia. He is on the frontier of what may be considered a new concept of what it means to build a movement – one that looks beyond borders and governments. His is a new and illuminating perspective on the potential power and scope of movements without territorial demarcations.

Refusing to use the name 'Thailand', because of its ethnic and colonial implications, Sivaraksa refers to his birthplace by its original name, Siam. He believes that the renaming of his country was the first tragic step in its dehumanization, a byproduct of ethnic bias and Western influences.[272] Through lectures and books, and exploring the concepts of love and nonviolence in the Gandhian and Buddhist traditions, he has fought the dictatorships of the armed forces.

Born in 1933 to an upper-middle-class Siamese family, Sivaraksa grew up with aspirations of becoming the country's prime minister. Having graduated from Assumption College in Bangkok, he attended St David's College in Wales and read for the bar at the Middle Temple in London. Upon completion of his education, Sivaraksa was a news reader for the British Broadcasting Corporation, before returning to Bangkok, where he found the country experiencing a series of political crises as successive governments underwent periodic coups d'état. In 1961, at the peak of a brutal military dictatorship, Sivaraksa traveled north and south throughout the country, talking to farmers and peasants east and west, in order to understand their concerns and perspectives. He also voiced his criticism of the war in Viet Nam. He was perturbed by the predicaments facing his country, which made him re-evaluate the direction he wanted for his life. Others experiencing similar impasses were joining the Communist Party in Thailand or insurrectionary groups, taking up secular ideologies or, often, pursuing the path of armed struggle. Not Sivaraksa.

In 1962, he started working with the University Press in Bangkok and, one year later, began a journal called the *Social Science Review*, which offered a forum for alternative points of view. In the stifled atmosphere of dictatorship and propaganda, the publication quickly became the leading journal for the nation's intellectuals and a prized outlet for the venting of opinions and the circulation of ideas. Young people who were attracted

272. Sulak Sivaraksa, interview with author, Bangkok, 15 January 1996.

Sulak Sivaraksa, Bangkok, Thailand. Forming training groups, establishing bookstores, editing journals and developing printing presses, Sivaraksa seeks to build a transnational nonviolent movement in South-East Asia and a global network of engaged Buddhists. (Photo: Doug Hostetter)

by the journal began meeting under the tutelage of Sivaraksa to discuss alternative political concepts and air proposals for their own actions. These students would later comprise the leadership of a 1973 uprising.[273] A bookstore established by Sivaraksa became a regular gathering place for young thinkers. Word spread that, among its shelves and around its tables, fresh ideas and new thinking would always be welcome. Sivaraksa was soon traveling, setting up journals and establishing a publishing firm, as well as lecturing.

Gandhi's call

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the young leader-editor attended two Quaker seminars. In the Philippines in 1966, he participated in a session run by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) concerning national goals and international responsibility; in Japan in 1970 he attended a similar consultative meeting on regional issues. His indebtedness to the Society of Friends is frequently mentioned by Sivaraksa. These seminars, along with his Buddhist background, helped to solidify his conclusions about nonviolent struggle as a method of resistance.[274]

While attending a World Council of Churches meeting in Sri Lanka, Sivaraksa met Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who was to have a profound effect on him and has since provided lasting friendship and counsel. In October 1966, under the auspices of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Nhat Hanh traveled to the Philippines to speak against the war in Viet Nam, about which comparatively little was then being reported. He described the hostilities to the editors, academicians, clergy and opinion leaders with whom he met. Later in the year, under FOR sponsorship, he traveled to North America, Europe and Australia, where, as much as any individual, Nhat Hanh helped to awaken the international community to the war being waged in former French Indochina under US sponsorship. A Zen master with superb English- and French-language skills, personable and courageous, possessed of literary gifts, a poet and the prolific author of sixty-six books, Nhat Hanh had helped to found Van Hanh University – a Buddhist institution – and established the School of Youth for Social Service, which Sivaraksa visited.

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273. 'A Thai Perspective on Socially Engaged Buddhism: A Conversation with Sulak Sivaraksa', in *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* (Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, 1994), p. 353, conversation between Sulak Sivaraksa and Donald Rothberg, July 1992.

274. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism with a Small "b" ', in *A Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, 1988), p. 182, interview by Jim Forest; George and Lillian Willoughby, personal communication to the author concerning Sulak Sivaraksa, 28 December 1995; David Elder, American Friends Service Committee, personal conversation with the author concerning Sulak Sivaraksa, 8 April 1996.

As early as 1963, Buddhist monks and nuns in Viet Nam had protested the anti-Buddhist policies of Ngo Dinh Diem and his regime, which was protecting the Roman Catholic minority. Sulak Sivaraksa thus encountered Buddhists who were attempting to practice nonviolent resistance as a conscious and deliberate strategy for asserting their principles and opposing the fighting. The various techniques used in Viet Nam included fasting, petitions, the singing of satirical songs, acceptance of arrests by the thousands, the carrying of family altars into streets to protest the movement of tanks and self-immolation (not considered a nonviolent method).[275] In the years since, the two Buddhists – Nhat Hanh, from his exile in France, and Sulak Sivaraksa, in Bangkok and even when self-exiled – have reinforced each other. Together, they have become the strongest international exponents for the point of view that Buddhism's message speaks to global affairs and not solely to a personal quest for meaning.[276]

Nhat Hanh was not the only potent influence on Sivaraksa, whose work has reached out to Muslims, Christians and others in neighboring countries and the Western world. Sivaraksa was directly affected by the life and writings of Gandhi.[277] He is aware of certain similarities between his own experiences in England – studying the law and being called to the bar – and those of Gandhi; he maintains that Gandhi is still a force in Thailand today. He claims that Gandhi's proposals for nonviolent struggle, self-reliance, pride in one's roots and culture and concerns about the impact of technology are vital issues. Gandhi was concerned that machines and technology displace human labor and add to the concentration of power in a few hands. If Gandhi's words resonate for the Thai people, much of the explanation is due to Sivaraksa; in a personal way, Gandhi serves as a point of reference for him.[278] Regarding Gandhi, he says:

> His adherence to truth and nonviolence and his fighting the British with these two principles convinced me that we can actually fight with nonviolence against any gigantic organization, or any violent ideology, or even the promotion of greed through consumerism.[279]

275. Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action* (Paris: Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation, n.d.), cited in Richard Deats, 'Nhat Hanh', in Roger S. Powers, William B. Vogele, Christopher Kruegler and Ronald M. McCarthy (eds.), *Protest, Power and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997); Sharp, 'Nonviolent Struggle: An Effective Alternative', op. cit., p. 116.
276. Richard Deats, editor of *Fellowship*, personal communication with the author concerning Sulak Sivaraksa, 9 April 1996.
277. 'A Thai Perspective on Socially Engaged Buddhism', op. cit., p. 355.
278. Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism with a Small "b"', op. cit., p. 185.
279. Sivaraksa, interview, 15 January 1996.

A Gandhian with whom Sivaraksa has an ongoing dialogue is Vincent Harding.[280] Harding had a philosophical influence on the American civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr, and, although he never sought to be a newsmaker, he was an influential representative for the Mennonite Central Committee in Atlanta and instrumental behind the scenes in the deliberations of both the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. As with other instances in which individuals have shared knowledge, the role of Quaker and Mennonite trainers from the United States and Canada who led seminars and spread knowledge of nonviolent action was a development that Sivaraksa says enabled Thai protesters to withstand brutal government repression of a nonviolent campaign:

> In 1992, the nonviolent struggle against the then-dictator was much better organized [thanks to the Quakers], despite the fact that there were killings for four days. The people resisted nonviolently all throughout and, this time, not only in Bangkok but in all provincial centers.[281]

In addition to the emphasis of the Friends on nonviolence and the sacredness of the human being, the Quaker vow to 'state truth to power' and to stress the need to question and resist state authority have also been factors that empowered the people of Thailand. Buddhists, Sivaraksa believes, have coexisted comfortably with the state for too long.[282] The Swedish scholar Johan Galtung, who became a Buddhist, also has influenced Sivaraksa, encouraging him to educate other Buddhists on the importance of approaching systems and not solely individuals.[283]

Protagonist of nonviolent struggle

In 1971, Sivaraksa organized the Komol Keemthong Foundation as a way of strengthening the idealism of the young; he named it after a friend who had fallen to communist forces. While based on an abstract ideal, the group works from the writings of Nhat Hanh and Paolo Freire, the Brazilian-born social sciences and education pioneer. Illiterate peasants, argues Freire, begin to develop courage to overcome their dependency and passivity only when they realize their reliance on their bosses: 'As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically "accept" their exploitation . . . they are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation.' Sivaraksa's work echoes Freire's view that 'It is only

280. Ibid.
281. Ibid.
282. 'A Thai Perspective on Socially Engaged Buddhism', op. cit., p. 356.
283. Ibid.

when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves.'[284]

A separate institution founded by Sivaraksa is the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation which, since 1968, has worked on issues of the environment, conservation and preservation of nature as well as providing artists with a place for retreat and meditation. Ecumenical organizations, such as the Coordinating Group on Religion and Society, founded in 1976, and the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD), established in 1980, were also started by Sivaraksa, the latter being among the first organizations concerned with human rights to be formed in Thailand. Its initial purpose was to aid those people in Thai society who had been scarred by mass assassinations ordered by the government, by helping them find the spirit of reconciliation, while at the same time salvaging those left wounded and still physically suffering the aftermath of the killings. The coordinating group offered a nonviolent alternative to the extreme choices offered by the political spectrum, which often seemed to be the only options. It also worked to save the lives of students following a violent coup d'état in October 1976, in which hundreds of youths were killed in their efforts to block the military takeover. When those who had gone into a jungle exile to join Chinese-backed communist cells eventually returned home in the early 1980s, disenchanted by their experiences, Sivaraksa contacted them and intervened to help them see that armed resistance was not everything that the Chinese had promised.[285] Many found his approach compelling and came to advocate nonviolent resistance because of their disappointments with guerrilla insurrectionary tactics. Sivaraksa challenged these students to think about tolerance, charity and justice; he urged them to consider nonviolent resistance as the ultimate weapon in their arsenal for survival.[286] A number of them associated themselves with TICD and similar nongovernmental organizations after their return, expanding their opportunities and benefiting communities.[287]

After the military coup of 1976 that overthrew the elected government, Sivaraksa went into self-imposed exile, fearing that he would be arrested for his efforts in the community. He continued his activism from abroad until able to return home without fear of arrest. Sivaraksa's decision to remain away from his home bespoke one of his beliefs: 'The defense of

284. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 46, 47.

285. Charles Keyes, 'Sulak Sivaraksa: Background Note', in *Five Cycles of Friendship* (Bangkok: Suksit Siam & Kled Thai Co., Ltd, 1993), p. 109.

286. Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism with a Small "b"', op. cit., p. 185.

287. Kara Newell, 'Letter to the Nobel Prize Committee from the American Friends Service Committee', in *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society,* op. cit., p. 378.

human rights takes ethical precedence over national sovereignty.'[288] In tense situations, he contends, 'we must exhaust all possible nonviolent responses'.[289] This includes *hijra*, or exiling oneself. In 1984, he was charged with *lèse majesté*, which makes it a crime to insult or criticize the monarchy or government and is punishable by three to fifteen years' imprisonment. A serious charge, it is comparable to treason in the British legal context. Sivaraksa served several months in prison before the charges were dropped. After each attempt to silence him, he quickly resumed his efforts to build a society that recognized human rights and traditional values in Siamese culture.

Demonstrations and constitutional amendments

Sivaraksa's activities were sidetracked by another military takeover in 1991. General Suchinda Kraprayoon came to power that February, as a result of a coup d'état that ended a government led by Chatchai Choonavan, Thailand's first civilian leader to be popularly elected in modern times.[290] Outspoken, Sivaraksa gave a speech at Thammasat University, one of the main centers of learning in Thailand, about the role played by the military in the coup. An investigation was undertaken on whether he should be charged with defamation of General Suchinda, and, as a result, another charge of *lèse majesté* was lodged against Sivaraksa in September 1991. The following month, fearing that he might 'disappear' after being arrested, he again went into exile.[291]

In December 1991, Thailand's fifteenth constitution was drafted with the idea of making Thai society more democratic. The apparent display of interest in democracy meant little to those who had been banished or were trying to withstand the authoritarian rule of the coup leaders. Sivaraksa was not the only one dissatisfied with the dictatorship of Suchinda; moreover, the fruits of his labors had ripened to the point of mass action. In May 1992, tens of thousands took to the streets in the largest protests Thailand had seen in decades.[292] The military was quick to respond. Soldiers clashed with the peaceful throngs that had gathered to voice their desire for constitutional amendments; they proclaimed their desire to make the post of prime minister an elected position, and demanded the resignation of

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288. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends', in Kenneth Kraft (ed.), *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and International Trends* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 134.
289. Ibid., p. 135.
290. Crossette, 'Thailand's Military Is Seen As Grasping Spoils of Power', op. cit.; Neil Kelly and David Watts, 'Thai Army Turns Machineguns on Bangkok Protest', *The Times* (London), 19 May 1992.
291. Keyes, 'Sulak Sivaraksa: Background Note', op. cit., p. 110.
292. Matt Miller, 'Thai Despot Forced to Resign in Mass Backlash to Brutal Crackdown', *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 24 May 1992, p. A17.

General Suchinda, who had broken a previous promise and appointed himself prime minister.[293] From outside his homeland, Sivaraksa watched news reports with horror as the popular demonstrations against the rule of Suchinda were brutally put down. Under the shadow of Bangkok's Democracy Monument, dozens of unarmed Thai citizens were killed, more than 375 were hospitalized, and hundreds were arrested.[294]

King Bhumibol Adulyadej brought the killing to a halt. Fundamental to the concept of kingship in Buddhist cultures is the idea that rulers take 'the principle of nonviolence and noninjury as the ideal basis of statecraft'.[295] In a televised admonition, the king used his unique position in Thai society to bring an end to the strife. He brought together in an audience the prime minister and a leader of the prodemocracy movement. He admonished them, saying that the country's fate rested in the swift resolution of the conflict.[296] The king's call for the cessation of the military crackdown on demonstrators was able to bring an end to the repression and chaos. When the week of strife ended, Suchinda had resigned. Nearly eighty unarmed citizens had died at his hand.[297]

A number of reforms were instituted to strengthen the basis for democracy. The constitution drafted at that time has remained in effect and five amendments have been added. The most significant provision for the nonviolent protesters – a byproduct of their toil – is the Fourth Amendment, which alters Article 159 and came into force in September 1992. It stipulates that the prime minister must be a member of the elected House of Representatives, appointed by the king, and approved by the Speaker of the House, who is also elected. The salient protections of this amendment are now embodied in the constitution as Article 163.[298] In other words, the road to becoming premier of Thailand now runs through democratic elections rather than military coup d'état. The Fifth Amendment came into force in February 1995 and makes the constitution still more democratic, including guarantees of individual freedoms, equal rights regardless of gender and the right of access to state information. The nonviolent direct action encouraged by Sivaraksa had made its mark.

Once an elected government was in place, Sivaraksa returned to Thailand late in 1992, hoping that he would receive justice. He was acquitted

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293. Kelly and Watts, 'Thai Army Turns Machineguns on Bangkok Protest', op. cit.
294. Ibid.; Kevin Cooney, 'Anand Begins Forming Thai Government', *Reuter Library Report*, 11 June 1992.
295. Balkhrisna Gokhala, 'Early Buddhist Kingship', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1966), p. 21.
296. Seth Mydans, 'In Age of Instability, a King Anchors Thailand', *New York Times*, 10 June 1996, p. A3.
297. Miller, 'Thai Despot Forced to Resign', op. cit., p. A17.
298. Amendments provided by Vijavat Isarabhakdi, first secretary (political), Royal Thai Embassy (Washington, D.C., 29 March 1996), fax.

of the charge of *lèse majesté* in April 1995 and, since that time, has renewed his campaign for communities based on justice and nonviolence, for the return of Thai culture to its Buddhist roots of peace and humanism, and against environmentally destructive modern development. A dark angle to the alluring kingdom has been coming to international light and justifies Sivaraksa's broad emphases over the years. Now considered the shadowy underside of the Asian economic miracle, Bangkok's rampant free-market mercantilism and corruption, lacking counterbalancing regulation, are reported to have produced chronic traffic problems in the capital city and pollution of its air and water sufficient to stunt the intelligence of the city's children.[299]

Socially engaged Buddhists

Sivaraksa's efforts to build a transnational community have followed Buddhism's 'middle path' on a planetary basis. He sees interdependence as a 'middle way' comprised of a just economic system and a peaceful world order.[300] Much as was the case with Gandhi's Hinduism and King's Christianity, Sivaraksa cannot separate his Buddhist faith from his political convictions: both politics and economics must be considerate of the individual in Buddhism; similarly, the individual is enjoined not to harm the community. Buddhism has no room for violence, in Sivaraksa's view, as nonviolence is at its heart, denoted by the word *santi*, or peace.[301]

Sivaraksa also encourages exploration and reciprocal understanding among people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds as conductants to the subsidence of political violence:

> In this day and age, to be a Buddhist and to fight nonviolently for social justice, and peace and decency, one cannot *only* look back to the essential teaching of the Buddha and one's own national heritage. One must indeed find good friends beyond one's national boundary and one's religious affiliation.[302]

Rather than leading Sivaraksa to withdraw from this world, his faith takes him to Thailand's current social problems:

> To use a nonviolent approach means that one has to tackle all three root causes of evil: greed, hatred, and delusion. That is why I am involved in working with Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims for alternatives to consumerism. We need our

299. Thomas L. Friedman, 'Bangkok Bogs Down', *New York Times*, 20 March 1996, p. A19.
300. Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends', op. cit., p. 130.
301. Sivaraksa, interview, 15 January 1996; Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Common Ground for Thai Buddhists and North American Christians?', in *A Socially Engaged Buddhism,* op. cit., p. 197, interview with Michael Knowles, February 1987.
302. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Thai Politics', in *A Socially Engaged Buddhism,* op. cit., p. 46.

religious and spiritual traditions in order for our work to be meaningful against greed and consumerism.[303]

In his estimation, the penetration of capital markets into South-East Asia has had the effect of speeding militarization, unsettling cultural values, devaluing human rights and increasing social inequalities. From Sivaraksa's perspective, a return to Buddhism would strengthen the ability of the Siamese to reverse the decline of their culture, for Buddhism finds its true spirit of nonviolence in humanism, compassion and tolerance – each of which opens up and transforms human development.[304] By training oneself in nonviolence, Sivaraksa maintains, 'we become able to destroy the structures of oppression and violence without becoming caught ourselves in hatred for those trapped within them.'[305]

The title of one of Sivaraksa's books of essays, *Seeds of Peace*, refers to the Buddhist depiction of the human mind as 'specifically a spectrum of seeds, or potentialities, that lie at the root level of consciousness'.[306] His essays plead for nourishing peaceful seeds with like actions and, in doing so, he asserts the actions themselves become seeds. While the first part of the book chronicles the plight of the citizens of Siam, the second section provides a prescription for present-day ills. The cure includes democracy, mercy, nonviolence and moral inner strength. Personal integrity is essential to any effective social action – a prescription derived from his experience as a grass-roots organizer and activist – not solely personal spirituality. Interpreting Buddhism as a tenet of the philosophy that 'world peace demands self-awareness and social awareness in equal measure', Sivaraksa's struggles for human rights and democracy have only confirmed these conclusions.[307] Everything converges in his philosophy of nonviolence – religion, culture, economics and politics are all integral parts of a single process for Sivaraksa – as he focuses on the development of the whole person, spiritually and materially.[308]

Through an organization he founded in 1988, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Sivaraksa encourages greater activism by Buddhists around the world, because he believes the faithful have become detached from world events. The organization acts as a clearinghouse for information, ideas and solutions for problems on the local, national and

303. Sivaraksa, interview, 15 January 1996.
304. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Non-Violence', in *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, op. cit., p. 113.
305. Sivaraksa, interview, 15 January 1996.
306. Tensho David Schneider, 'A Call to Action, Buddhist Style', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 April 1992, p. 6.
307. Sivaraksa, 'Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends', op. cit., p. 127.
308. Sulak Sivaraksa, 'A Thoroughly Unpopular Siamese', in *A Socially Engaged Buddhism*, op. cit., p. 178, interview with Michael Wright.

international level. Having no ties to governments, the organization offers training for individuals living under circumstances of stress. Programs cover nonviolent action, ecology, economics, development and spirituality. The main thrust, however, is to empower citizens to solve their own problems as well as to create a more complete community. Thich Nhat Hanh, now in his seventies and living in France, is a mentor for the socially engaged Buddhists. The network's efforts are also supported by the Dalai Lama.[309]

The founding of organizations may be Sivaraksa's strong suit. Since 1976, he has created six research, training, religious and cultural entities that are still vigorously operating. The American Friends Service Committee recognized that Sivaraksa's advocacy for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists has 'helped to form and nurture a community of persons dedicated to nonviolence in a region particularly torn by violence and war'.[310] Traveling through Europe and North America, Sivaraksa has rallied and organized Thais. He has also publicized the country's prodemocracy movement as an endeavor that goes hand in hand with 'a sustainable and appropriate path of development . . . rooted in democracy, justice, and cultural integrity'.[311]

Coalitions against structural violence

Sivaraksa specifically champions the formation of coalitions that are able to bring students, the middle class, professionals, civil servants and members of Buddhist monastic orders together. One such formation – an informal Thai coalition of nongovernmental organizations – fomented the demonstrations of 1992 that became the turning point for the broadening of democracy and circumscribing the military.[312] Charles Radin of the *Boston Globe* notes that over a period of twenty years, as successive governments lost public confidence, the coalition gained popular support by 'avoiding corruption and offering a spiritually-based approach' to development.[313]

By emphasizing human beings rather than institutional economic development, the coalition has tried to show that alternatives can be found to drug trafficking, prostitution and child trafficking. These afflictions, according to Sivaraksa, result from what is ironically called 'progress' and have specifically brutal implications for women, youth and children. Tens of thousands of children in Asia – perhaps more than a million, according to the estimates of some social workers and governments – have been forced into prostitution, often sold like chattels into a present-day form of slavery

309. Charles A. Radin, 'Activist Says Protests Are Work of Peaceful Coalition', *Boston Globe*, 9 May 1992, p. 2.
310. Newell, 'Letter to the Nobel Prize Committee', op. cit., p. 375.
311. '1995 Right Livelihood Award Winners', *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 October 1995, p. 13.
312. Radin, 'Activist Says Protests Are Work of Peaceful Coalition', op. cit., p. 2.
313. Ibid.

from which, for a variety of reasons, they cannot escape.[314] Economic development was held up as the avenue that would allow South-East Asia to dispense with its notorious brothels but, instead, child prostitution is reported on the rise. The group rejects the European-American-Japanese model of unlimited industrialization, get-rich-quick development and institutionalized economic violence that neglects the human dimension. Sivaraksa states, 'We need to become able to tackle the structural violence. . . . In this way we can look forward to a nonviolent society at the local, national and international levels, with social justice and ecological balance.'[315]

A champion of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, Sivaraksa fights against the loss of cultural identity and what he likens to a religion of consumerism. 'We have to look for alternative media coverage . . . as well as alternative educational activities . . . to strengthen indigenous cultures and spiritual traditions.'[316] Sivaraksa argues that a sense of community is an 'important form of nonviolent resistance, as a support for questioning consumerism and the structures of domination and oppression.'[317] In this light, he has also sought to educate Buddhist monks and nuns in the work of community development, endeavoring to raise awareness among religious orders of social trends and to encourage their direct involvement in community needs.[318]

Those who question the impact of intellectuals, printing presses or bookshops might think again. Honored with the Right Livelihood Award – conferred independently, it is also known as the alternative Nobel Prize – for his work as both a distinguished professor and grass-roots activist, Sivaraksa has taken his message to universities as a visiting professor.[319] In writing more than 100 books, and in editing seven magazines in the English and Thai languages, he has addressed humane development, environmental preservation and cleanup, the use of nonviolent resistance for social and political change and the imperatives for an engaged Buddhism. As the American Friends Service Committee wrote in a letter nominating Sivaraksa for the Nobel Peace Prize, he does not stop with advocacy of peace and justice, he also constructs 'institutions and structures which will create the environment in which peace and justice can grow and flourish'.[320]

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314. Nicholas D. Kristof, 'Asian Childhood Sacrificed to Prosperity's Lust', *New York Times*, 14 April 1996, p. A1. An estimated 200,000 child prostitutes have been noted by the campaign End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT). See Carol Smolenski, 'Sex Tourism and the Sexual Exploitation of Children', *Christian Century*, 15 November 1995, pp. 1079–81.
315. Sivaraksa, interview, 15 January 1996.
316. Ibid.
317. 'A Thai Perspective on Socially Engaged Buddhism', op. cit., p. 366.
318. Newell, 'Letter to the Nobel Prize Committee', op. cit., p. 377.
319. Schneider, 'A Call to Action, Buddhist Style', op. cit., p. 6.
320. Newell, 'Letter to the Nobel Prize Committee', op. cit., p. 379.

As author, editor, organizer and publisher, he has championed the expression of alternative points of view throughout South-East Asia. Significantly, for an era in which the frontiers that define national sovereignty are becoming more flexible, Sulak Sivaraksa has sought to build a movement without territorial boundaries and worked to educate an entire region about the revaluation and efficacy of nonviolence.

Nonviolence is never too late: the Palestinian *intifada*

Under the dusty mulberry tree, under the clerical embrace of the Russian Orthodox Church and the stern authority of the police station and prison, a few score men and women, Jews and Palestinians . . . were engaged in a vigil and hunger strike, practising the principles of nonviolent protest.
Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi[321]

Competing claims to the same small land

The State of Israel came into being as the triumphant culmination of the Zionist movement, which emerged in late-nineteenth-century Russia. Zionism was a specific response to the nationalist movements that had arisen in Europe after the French Revolution – the benefits of which largely excluded Jews, who were considered 'foreign'. It was also an attempt to correct centuries of Western anti-Semitism, currents of which culminated in the great tragedy of the Holocaust under Nazism.

Having been driven out of Jerusalem in the second century, the Jewish people clung to the religious doctrine that they would return. Initially dispersed throughout the Mediterranean basin, they gradually established communities in much of the world. After their departure from the city, Jerusalem became Christian. Over centuries, those who followed the Prophet Muhammad became the dominant population. While most of the people were Muslim, about 20 percent remained Christian. Small Jewish communities that remained and survived through the Middle Ages and into the modern period generally lived in harmony with their Arab Muslim and Christian neighbors.

By the nineteenth century, the strongest Jewish communities in the Diaspora lived in Russia and Poland. When Theodor Herzl, a Viennese Jew who worked in Paris, wrote *The Jewish State*, his ideas – expressed as Zionism – took root. Zionism had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine. It was, in itself, a form of nationalism, and many of its organizational and social ideas originated in Marxism, which was

321. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, 'Under Jerusalem's Barren Mulberry Tree', *Jerusalem Post*, 1 June 1988.

developing at the same time. The first Zionist congress was held in Basle, Switzerland, in 1897, officially establishing the movement. Perhaps the Zionist movement was unaware of the populace and culture of Palestine, where half a million Arabs were living, their families having dwelled there for millennia. A slogan that Palestine was a 'land without people for a people without a land' was willingly adopted by numerous Zionists, despite the contrary reality. When the Ottomans turned down the Zionist request for Palestine, Great Britain offered support. Small groups of Zionists, often fleeing pogroms in Russia, began to immigrate to Palestine at the turn of the century where they made land purchases and built settlements and, later, developed militias. Prominent and influential British leaders, including Winston Churchill, thought that both the Arabs and the British would benefit from Zionist prosperity: 'Mr Churchill was convinced that Zionism meant progress and prosperity and not ruin, for the Arabs'.[322]

During the First World War, the British Government made a contractual bargain with leading Russian Jews living in Britain, who had assumed the leadership of the Zionist movement, for a homeland to be created for Jews in Palestine. Named the Balfour Declaration after the British foreign secretary who signed the document, this arrangement was made public on 2 November 1917 and called for both Arabs and Jews to live side by side in Palestine. It became part of the Treaty of Versailles:

> His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.[323]

The Balfour Declaration became the legal basis for the Jewish colonization of Palestine after the First World War, buttressing in law the Jews' claim to Palestine. The moral claim was biblical. The Arabs living in Palestine – Palestinians – obviously had no sympathy for the Balfour Declaration. Lord Balfour himself conceded that the pledges were incompatible and admitted 'in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country'.[324]

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322. Neil Caplan, 'The Yishuv, Sir Herbert Samuel, and the Arab Question in Palestine, 1921–25', in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim (eds.), *Zionism and Arabism in Palestine and Israel* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 8.
323. Royal Commission of Enquiry [Peel Commission], *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, July 1937), p. 22.
324. Arthur James Balfour, '11 August 1919 Memorandum Respecting Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia [132187/2117/44A]', in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939,* Vol. 4: *1919* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1952), p. 345.

At the end of the First World War, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the British assumed authority over Palestine as a mandatory power. In 1922, they divided the territory administratively, turning over to Arab rule the land east of the Jordan River. The stage was set for a conflict of epic proportions between the indigenous Arabs and immigrant Jews.

Palestinian efforts to hold onto their land on the west bank of the Jordan River were complicated by the promises made to the Jews by the British administrators. Pledges to the Zionists and the Arabs were often in contradiction, and both groups came to see the British as the obstacle to the realization of their goals. In the 1920s there was bloody violence, and from 1930 onward the British began losing control of the situation, as Britain's authority increasingly became the object of both Arab and Jewish resistance. Palestinian antagonism toward the continuing migration of European Jews erupted periodically into bloodshed. Although the number of emigrating Jews was small compared to those Jews who were seeking a safe haven, the mass of Jewish newcomers was huge in proportion to the population of Palestine. As the flow of Jewish immigrants increased at the start of the 1930s, Arab conferences deliberated techniques of opposition, such as the breaking of contacts with British administrators, resignation from official jobs and civil disobedience. In March 1933 in Jaffa, Palestinians held the Noncooperation Congress (Mu'tamar al-Lata'awun), although its decisions were never implemented. By October 1933, demonstrations were occurring in Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere, with Arabs from across Palestine filling the streets.[325]

The sense of the impending loss of land as well as the strain caused by the increase in the percentage of Jews in the population climaxed in the Arab rebellion that lasted from 1936 to 1939. It began with a general strike that was declared on 19 April 1936 and lasted for more than 170 days, nearly six months, possibly making it the longest such strike in history.[326] Although nonviolent strikes, boycotts, nonpayment of taxes and civil disobedience continued to be part of the picture, the revolt turned into a violent rebellion. Palestinian folklore and song subsequently tended not to celebrate the rebellion for any particular presence of nonviolent techniques, but solely as an armed uprising. Indeed, armed bands and secret fighting societies brought the situation close to civil war. Armed Jewish resistance

325. Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin al-Husaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), pp. 31, 32.

326. Ibid.; See also Royal Commission of Enquiry, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, op. cit. Interview with Gene Sharp in Afif Safieh, *Nonviolent Struggle: An Efficient Technique of Political Action* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, 1986–87), p. 10, also in *Al-Fajr*, 2 May 1986; *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 65 (Autumn 1987); also see Gene Sharp, 'The Intifadah and Nonviolent Struggle', *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 73 (Autumn 1989).

also accelerated in the 1930s. By the end of the decade, in 1939, the British curtailed the immigration of Jews, as they tried to reconcile the two irreconcilable halves of the Balfour Declaration.

The Jews were Europeanized by centuries of living throughout the continent of Europe and, despite persecution, they had made dramatic contributions to the culture and politics of many countries.[327] European support for Jewish migration to the Holy Land was significant, often because of concealed bigotry and the desire to get rid of their Jewish populations. The guilt of western Christendom for centuries of anti-Semitism also played a part in affirming migration to Palestine. Meanwhile, American Jewry, both individuals and institutions, gave money to buy land and provided strong political promotion in the nation's capital. Those Europeans and Americans who might otherwise have felt that scriptural claims were not the appropriate basis for international relations, because of their ties to the Judeo-Christian tradition and identification with biblical accounts of the ancient Israelites, felt compelled to support the creation of a National Home for the Jews. By the 1940s, in the popular mind worldwide, the tragedy of the Holocaust forced concession to Jewish claims upon the land of Palestine.

After the end of the Second World War, the issue of Palestine was thrust onto the international agenda in 1947, largely with the help of the United States. Recognizing that it would be impossible to satisfy the claims of both Palestinians and Jews, the United Nations came to the awkward decision to partition Palestine. The idea that the Jews readily accepted the plan while the Arabs rejected it has been debunked by Israeli 'new' or 'post-Zionist' historians working with newly released archival materials.[328] The Jews were well prepared for statehood, but the Arabs, most of whose leaders had departed from Palestine, were in no position to administer themselves, and the Arab institutions were insufficient for providing for independent statehood.[329] The UN design lacked enforcement powers, and the world body turned its attention elsewhere. It was left to the parties involved to implement the plan. The Jews continued to fight for the land, claiming that they were defending Resolution 181, protecting their half, and operating under a UN decision. War raged between Jews and Palestinians from the

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327. Sir Ronald Storrs, British governor of Jerusalem, noted Arab inequality of access to British democracy: 'Politically, all the Arabs in the world would not have turned at the Polls one single vote.' Jewry, however, he considered to be prominent and influential at all levels of British society. Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1943), pp. 358, 359.

328. See Avi Shlaim, 'The Debate about 1948', *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 3 (August 1995), pp. 285–304, regarding the effect of recently released official archives on his own work and that of other Israeli 'post-Zionist' historians, such as Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé.

329. Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1947–51* (London: I. B. Taurus & Co., Ltd, 1994), p. 67.

time of the vote on the resolution – 29 November 1947 – until April of the following year. On 14 May 1948, when the British withdrew, Jews filed a declaration of independence and pronounced Israel a state.

The conflict between Palestinians and Jews over land and emigration was transformed into a war between Israel and the major Arab states of Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Jordan. The Arabs were ill-equipped, poorly led and disunited.[330] Each army represented a competitor more interested in enlarging its own patrimony than in liberating Palestine. The Palestinians had other disadvantages also. While Zionism had become a relatively sophisticated global movement, the Arabs were still awakening from their slumber under the Ottoman Empire and its misrule of Palestine for four centuries. Almost the entire Arabic-speaking world had been under European colonialism since after the First World War. While the concept of independence had been promised and repromised to the Arabs, the fundamental idea of independent statehood for the Palestinians was incompatible with British administration and its basic interest in protecting the sea route to India through the Suez Canal.

Although an armistice in 1949 established temporary frontiers, the reality was one of unchecked and episodic outbreaks of hostilities. The Arab strategy then, and subsequently, was based on re-forming an alliance that could undo the effects of the 1948 war. In 1967, active warfare resumed. After six days of fighting, the Arab states were not only humiliated by Israel, but also defeated. Israel took control of the remaining lands that had been allocated for the Palestinians in 1947 under the UN plan; the Israelis militarily occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and placed Arab East Jerusalem under their authority. The Arab–Israeli conflict was changed again. From a struggle between states, it became one between peoples over the remaining land of what had been Palestine. Israelis had become an occupying power, and the Palestinians an occupied populace. The hostilities and resulting military occupation left the Palestinians with the realization that if they were ever to get back any of their land, they must do it on their own.

Since 1931, a significant school of thought among the Palestinian Arabs was convinced that armed struggle was the only means for preventing the loss of their homeland to the Zionists with their superior resources. In 1964, Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt assisted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) into being as a way of asserting his power within the Arab world. At the end of the 1967 war, the PLO was taken over by Fateh – the party of Yasir Arafat that had come into being in the late 1950s – as it succeeded in wresting control of the organization from the Nasser-

330. In May 1948, there were 4,000 Palestinian forces, joined by 8,000 mostly irregular Arab soldiers, 'no match' for the active Jewish military force of 22,425. Pappé, *The Making of the Arab–Israeli Conflict,* op. cit., p. 65.

backed leadership. With Arab unity proving futile, exiled Palestinian activists had been arguing throughout the 1950s and 1960s about the need for self-reliance and armed struggle as basic principles, and, by 1968, 'armed popular revolution' had been adopted as the *only* means of liberating Palestine. The guerrilla and terrorist operations that were conducted under this doctrine, although not the first such offenses, steadily lost the Palestinians whatever political support in the West they might otherwise have engendered as they, equally steadily, lost more land to Israeli settlements. The carnage stiffened the resolve of those Israelis who were opposed to compromise, weakened those who wanted a negotiated settlement and produced revulsion in the international community.

In the eastern part of the Mediterranean, although the idea of compromise or coexistence might have been entertained privately for much of this century, such notions were far from the minds of most Jews or Arabs by the latter part of the century. It is true that a variety of small marginal movements stoutly maintaining that the Jewish state had to reconcile itself with the existence of the Arabs had earlier formed within Zionist circles, but they were in the minority. The philosopher-theologian Martin Buber and American-born rabbi Judah Magnes had argued eloquently during the 1920s for brotherhood and a binational state. The Communist Party also had its vision of a binational state and, in the 1930s, had been among the first to propose a sharing of power. The communists were opposed to armed struggle. Palestinian and Jewish communists earlier in the century worked together, particularly on labor questions, and each considered the other to be part of the overall equation.

As time wore on, the Israeli victory of 1967 no longer seemed quite so triumphal. The military occupation of lands reserved by the United Nations for Palestinians took its toll on the victor within a few years. Yesh Gvul, or There Is a Limit, was formed in 1975 by reservists in the armed forces who refused to be assigned to Lebanon and later the occupied territories, accepting prison instead. A group of high-school students who refused to perform military service in the occupied territories was created in 1978, calling itself the Group of 27.[331] Some uniformed army generals organized themselves into committees and announced themselves as opposed to the occupation; a number of these eventually accepted civil disobedience as a necessary means of expressing their dissatisfaction with a policy of military occupation.[332] Shalom Achshav, or Peace Now, came into existence in 1978, the result of a letter written to Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and

331. David Hall-Cathala, *The Peace Movement in Israel, 1967–87* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 171–8, 216, 217.

332. Noami Chazan, member of the Knesset, interview with author, East Jerusalem, 6 June 1988; Souad Dajani, *Eyes without Country: Searching for a Palestinian Strategy of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), pp. 80–1, 199 note 75.

signed by 350 military officers, some of whom had been decorated in three wars. Never mailed, the missive instead appeared in a newspaper and asked the premier not to put control of the occupied territories ahead of peace.[333]

Although such peace groups could produce immense rallies of tens of thousands – sometimes hundreds of thousands – and were a fixture on the Israeli landscape after 1967, recurring violence tended to drown out rational arguments for sharing the land. Literally dozens of such organizations proliferated, yet they had little influence on Israeli Government policy, and their views were often discredited. Reasoned Jewish voices with perspectives on peace argued in literary discourse, political literature and some theological institutes. Rabbi David Hartman was among the Israeli philosophers, educators and theologians looking at the problems of long-term peace and security and of how ultimately to live side by side with the Arabs. Meanwhile, grievance piled upon accusation, killing matched slaughter, and blood continued to spill. Each side competed against the other's hostility.

In this context, a Palestinian living under Israeli military authority who sought a novel approach to lifting the military occupation might view violence as 'business as usual'. What might be dissimilar? Nonviolent resistance. Václav Havel alluded to this twist when writing about dissident movements against Soviet hegemony: '[They did] not shy away from the idea of violent political overthrow because the idea seems too radical, but on the contrary, because it [did] not seem radical enough.'[334]

The Committee Confronting the Iron Fist and the Center for the Study of Nonviolence

In 1982, a group of Palestinians and Israelis began the first practical implementation of nonviolent direct action in recent times. Feisel Husseini explains:

> The Committee Defending the Rights of Abu Anish . . . was the first direct action – that is, announcing a committee which had in it Palestinians and Israelis. Before, it was committees that were created by Israelis . . . [or] another committee like a music committee, but this was the first time that we had something . . . together. Then, after that, we created the Campaign to Free Jabril Rajoub. Then we decided, why should we change names all of the time, so we went on with our work, calling it the Committee Confronting the Iron Fist.[335]

Various committees were led by Husseini, a member of an aristocratic Palestinian family and a grandson and great-grandson of former Jerusalem

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333. Amiram Goldblum, for many years the official spokesperson for Shalom Achshav, or Peace Now. Interview with the author, East Jerusalem, 5 November 1994.

334. Václav Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', in Jan Vladislav (ed.), *Living in Truth*, op. cit., p. 93. This essay was originally written in October 1978.

335. Feisel Husseini, interview with author, Jerusalem, 30 January 1996.

mayors who traced their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. Not unlike the Polish Committee for the Workers' Defense (KOR) and the Czech Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS), the Committee Confronting the Iron Fist used simple documentation and media coverage to sensitize the public to individual cases of imprisonment and deportation. Although it was often illegal for such committees to work together, they were sometimes able to obtain permission from Israeli authorities for purposes of protest. The committees staged demonstrations, prepared leaflets, picketed, and held vigils and news conferences to protest prison conditions, collective punishment and other measures instituted by the occupation.[336] The basic platform of the committees held that military occupation was harmful to both peoples:

> We decided that the main enemy is the occupation, and it is the main enemy for the two communities, for the Palestinian community and for the Israeli community. Also, the occupation can hurt the morale of the people who are controlling the occupation, no less than the people who are under it, maybe more. We reached an agreement that we must – Palestinians and Israelis working together – end this occupation . . . that it was in the interest of the Israelis to end this occupation as well as for the Palestinians.[337]

The committees were among the first harbingers of the political evolution underway in the territories. In the years that followed, Husseini would often be jailed for his advocacy of nonviolence.[338] When he was under house arrest, the committees met at his home to plan events. In 1986, for example, more than 150 Israelis and Palestinians turned out for a demonstration in Beit Hanina, to protest the expulsion of three Palestinians from the West Bank.[339]

Other efforts were also afoot. A Palestinian-American psychologist named Mubarak Awad returned home to Jerusalem in 1983 to open the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence. Having been educated by Quakers and Mennonites in the United States, where he studied Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr – particularly the 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail' – Awad began leading workshops on nonviolent struggle and circulating pamphlets in 1983.[340] He was supported in these activities by Jonathan Kuttab, a Palestinian-American lawyer and one of the first Palestinian attorneys to learn Hebrew in order to pass the Israeli bar.

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336. Ibid.; Marjorie Hope and James Young, 'Christians and Nonviolent Resistance in the Occupied Territories', *Christian Century*, 27 April 1988, p. 431.
337. Husseini, interview, 30 January 1996.
338. Susan Sachs, 'The PLO's "Consensus Maker"', *Newsday*, 4 May 1993, p. 17.
339. 'Jews, Arabs Protest "Iron Fist"', *Al-Fajr*, 7 February 1986.
340. David Richardson, 'Palestinians Weigh Pros and Cons of Passive Resistance', *Jerusalem Post*, 16 October 1983.

Husseini, invigorated by the range of Awad's ideas, consciously aided Awad and was able to help him by offering him legitimacy.[341]

Awad prepared a program of nonviolent resistance for the territories, which was published by the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence in 1983.[342] Some Palestinians were uncertain about Gandhi because they had heard about his opposition to the creation of an Islamic republic in Pakistan. Others were unsure about Martin Luther King Jr, because he had often expressed sympathy for the Israelis, but is not known to have mentioned Palestinian rights. Furthermore, according to David Hall-Cathala, 'amongst Palestinians, the idea of nonviolence has almost been synonymous with submission'.[343] Gandhi had the same trouble, because Indian Muslims thought *ahimsa* to be timidity.[344] Awad sought out the writings of Islamic nonviolent proponents for publication. Twice traveling to India, in 1985 and 1987, he met with Muslims who had worked with Gandhi and spent time at Gandhi's Sevagram ashram in Maharashtra.

Adopting Gandhi's ideas of a constructive program and the importance of villages, during the years 1983 to 1986 Awad spent time in fifty or sixty villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He recommended that Palestinians buy from other Palestinians, use bartering for self-sufficiency and mark the boundaries of their land by planting olive trees and rose bushes. He showed villagers how simple ideas could form the basis of nonviolent struggle. One hamlet got its land back through such techniques, after its acreage had been allocated for an Israeli settlement.[345]

During 1983 and 1984, the small center for nonviolence also translated and disseminated several thousand copies of a chapter written by Gene Sharp from his book *Power, Struggle and Defense*.[346] In it, Sharp argues that traditional precepts of power and systems of military-based defense are fallible, possibly disastrous, and that self-reliance is often overlooked as a strategy. It reminds us that an occupying military force has no true power without the consent and obedience of the occupied. Civilian-based defense – or active nonviolent resistance – requires a desire on the part of the occupied to defend their society and way of life in a manner that limits

341. Husseini, interview, 30 January 1996.

342. Mubarak E. Awad, *Nonviolence in the Occupied Territories* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, 1983).

343. Hall-Cathala, *The Peace Movement in Israel, 1967–87*, op. cit., p. 180.

344. B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi: Pan-Islamism, Imperialism, and Nationalism in India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 285–96.

345. 'Tqu' Villagers Block Settler Expansion', *Al-Fajr*, 17 January 1986, p. 3.

346. Although translated into Thai, Burmese and Brazilian Portuguese, Sharp's book has never been published in English. A version in Hebrew was published in Israel by Mifras Publishing House. A text similar to the chapter distributed in the occupied territories is found in the first chapter of Sharp's *National Security through Civilian-Based Defense* (Omaha, Nebraska: Association for Transarmament Studies, 1985).

destruction and harm. Sharp argues that defense based on planned non-cooperation by the citizenry, including changes in social infrastructure, offers an alternative to a military response to foreign invasion because a society that is ungovernable for the attacker has the effect of deterring aggressive behavior. More important than killing an invader's young conscripts, the chapter argues, might be the protection of a free press. Through examples from the resistance against Hitler, he describes how ignoring illegal orders can work.

During the mid-1980s, Sharp was invited to visit Israel twice. In addition to lecturing in Israeli West Jerusalem and Arab East Jerusalem, he warned Israeli strategic analysts in Tel Aviv and Zichron Ya'acov that a nonviolent rebellion by Palestinians might be in the works and advised that Israeli officials needed to think carefully about how to react to such a revolt.[347] A brutal crushing of a nonviolent movement by the Israelis would only serve to encourage Palestinian tendencies pledged to armed struggle and terrorism. In 1986, Meron Benvenisti, an Israeli expert on the West Bank, also predicted that the Palestinians would utilize nonviolent direct action: 'Eventually the Palestinians will learn that their real power lies in civil disobedience, not senseless terrorism. It's inevitable.'[348]

New ideas on negotiations

During the 1980s, Palestinian intellectuals in the occupied territories were leading the challenge to old dogma, particularly with new ideas on negotiating with the Israelis. This played an important part in the re-evaluation of armed struggle, since focusing on what might be achieved through talks made the benefits of nonviolent struggle more visible and tangible. The intellectuals hoped to channel growing popular discontent away from mere protest and toward nonviolent, political goals that could affect a settlement. They developed a philosophy of mass participation and the idea that they, through their own actions, could influence political outcomes. They put forward ideas for winning Palestinian independence and voiced a willingness to compromise with Israel on the issue of land in return for recognition of their rights.[349] Feisel Husseini, philosopher Sari Nusseibeh, lawyer Ziad Abu Zayyad, journalist Radwan Abu Ayyash and publisher Hanna Siniora were among those reconsidering concepts on the Palestinian agenda.

Palestinian places of learning had, especially during the period 1980 to 1982, developed significant, if small, student movements of resistance. Faculty members were as much a part of this as students.

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347. Gene Sharp, interview with author, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 19 October 1995.
348. Thomas Smerling, 'Gandhi's Spirit on the West Bank?', *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 April 1986, p. 15.
349. Sari Nusseibeh, 'Perhaps a New National Strategy', *Al-Fajr*, 9 May 1986.

Some of the activists and intellectuals learned Hebrew in order to communicate with Israelis. Husseini had been among the first to speak and give lectures to Israeli audiences in Hebrew, having learned the language while in prison in Haifa in 1968. Immediately after leaving prison, Husseini began having conversations with some of the Israeli political parties of the Left, and gave interviews in Hebrew to the Israeli press. Zayyad also started speaking to Israeli audiences in Hebrew in 1968 and published a journal *Gesher* (Bridge) in their tongue. Numerous published pieces in Hebrew, English and Arabic argued the necessity for direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. By the early 1980s, Husseini and Nusseibeh were having discussions not only with Israeli intellectuals, but also with some Israeli Government officials.[350]

Nusseibeh, Husseini and others also sought, through the fax machine, to influence thinking in the PLO, with which many of them were associated and which was at the time based in Tunisia. The PLO gave some support for civilian organizing in the territories and acknowledged a number of the new concepts, usually expressing its backing through Abu Jihad, second-in-command to Arafat. Toward the end of 1985, Husseini recalls, Abu Jihad started talking to him (in Arabic) about passive resistance. 'The first talk was about passive resistance, but we didn't like the name, so we started talking about having another title, and we reached "aggressive non-violence".'[351] While the PLO sporadically encouraged the use of nonviolent strategies, it left its basic doctrine of armed struggle intact.[352]

Building the base for nonviolent resistance

Armed struggle remained ascendant until Palestinians living in the occupied territories chose to bring forward an alternative form of resistance from their history. The *intifada* – the Palestinian uprising that began on 7 December 1987 – represented a break in the predominant concept of armed struggle as the only or best tool for resistance, an idea first propounded in the early 1930s.[353] The hardened bitterness created by the basic dispute, and the means used by both sides in the conflict, however, meant that violence was always in the background. The 'winds of hatred, intolerance and vengeance' blew as strongly in the Israeli as in the Arab camp, commented one Israeli writer.[354] The legacy of terrorism could not be discarded, nor could genocidal fears that the one wanted to obliterate (or at least expel)

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350. Husseini, interview, 30 January 1996.
351. Ibid.
352. 'PLO to Advocate Civil Disobedience in Occupied Territories', *Al-Fajr*, 23 June 1986.
353. Shai Lachman, 'Arab Rebellion and Terrorism in Palestine, 1929–39: The Case of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam and His Movement', in Kedourie and Haim (eds.), *Zionism and Arabism in Palestine and Israel*, op. cit., p. 52.
354. Ezrahi, 'Under Jerusalem's Barren Mulberry Tree', op. cit.

the other be abated. The *intifada* represented a highly significant and instructive change, as nonviolent direct action became the predominant form of Palestinian resistance.

Within Israel, organizations such as Peace Now, East for Peace and Yesh Gvul re-emerged in the advent of the *intifada* and, again, expressed their opposition to Israeli occupation policies. Israeli military and civilian psychologists and psychiatrists advised the country's leadership that young conscripts were suffering psychological stress as a result of being part of an occupying force rather than perceiving themselves as soldiers defending Israeli security. The members of Israeli peace groups often formed working relationships with Palestinians who also wanted peace. While the ability of Israeli and Arab peace organizations to influence government policy was limited, those who participated in their joint efforts learned a valuable lesson: the two peoples could work together. During the two years that the strategies of the *intifada* remained overwhelmingly nonviolent, an atmosphere of solidarity flourished in pockets of the Palestinian and Israeli communities.

The uprising's accomplishments are a reminder of the potency of nonviolent sanctions, particularly given the history of protracted Israeli–Palestinian bitterness. They suggest that it is never too late to introduce nonviolent tools in attempting to address problems of political violence. Only after the world realized that the Palestinians were using chiefly nonviolent methods did they feel the empathy of the international community.

The *intifada* is often characterized as a violent insurrection, yet, during its first two years, it was extremely innovative in its nonviolent techniques. Confusion arises because, mixed with classical methods from the broad repertoire of nonviolent actions – such as peaceful demonstrations, boycotts and civil disobedience – was behavior that some observers call 'limited violence', mostly the controversial throwing of stones.[355] While the *intifada* did not directly lift the military occupation of Palestinian lands captured in 1967, its story is a tale of swift political change in response to the renewed usage of nonviolent sanctions.

The uprising rested on nonmilitary political organizing. Soon after the 1967 war, covert grass-roots organizing began to spread across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, led by the Communist Party. The communists 'stressed institution-building in contrast to . . . guerrilla activities'.[356] Other parties and factions initiated similar efforts as they saw themselves being marginalized from political life by the activities of the politically oriented Communist

355. Edy Kaufman, 'The Intifadah's Limited Violence', *Journal of Arab Affairs,* Vol. 9 (Fall 1990), pp. 109–21; William B. Vogele, 'Learning and Nonviolent Struggle in the Intifadah', *Peace and Change,* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1992), pp. 312–40.

356. Hillel Frisch, 'From Armed Struggle over State Borders to Political Mobilization and Intifada within It: The Transformation of the PLO Strategy in the Occupied Territories', *Plural Societies,* Vol. 19, Nos. 2–3 (1990), pp. 103, 104.

Party, although their other efforts organizing military cadres also continued. The development of Palestinian trade unions was accelerated by this trend, and it led to a revival of the labor movement.[357] One scholar told the *New York Times* that perhaps 45,000 committees had come into being in the territories that could act as bases of organization for the *intifada*, including student unions and trade unions.[358] Membership in these diverse groups, even if largely tied to pre-existing parties or factions, meant openings for participation and new leadership. From the physics professor to the baker, the *intifada* possessed unusual breadth and depth. The nonmilitary organizing of sports, cultural, youth and women's clubs and societies was underway almost twenty years before the *intifada*. The development of such surreptitious networks of civilian organizations coincided with other forces, building into a preponderantly nonviolent rebellion.[359] As civilian organizing proceeded, the cooperation of Palestinians with Israeli military authorities began to change, and the idea of a return to normalcy became a thing of the past.[360] Consistent with military occupations elsewhere, Israel's had relied on Palestinian submission.

The intifada *and rapid political change*

The Palestinian rebellion or *intifada* is presumed to have begun in response to the 9 December 1987 deaths of four laborers from the Gaza Strip who were crushed when an Israeli truck at a military checkpoint collided with their two vans waiting to pass through army controls after a day's work in Israel. Seven other day workers in the same vehicle were injured. The funeral for three of those killed drew 4,000 demonstrators.[361] In the next few weeks, seemingly unorganized protest by Palestinians broke out across the occupied territories in response to what they claimed was a deliberate act of violence.

When the *intifada* broke out, two decisions of the Israeli military authorities had the opposite of their intended effect: schools were closed and curfews levied. Both measures were meant to suppress dissent, but students instead found themselves at home, where both they and their professors were in touch with entire communities.

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357. Joost R. Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 65.
358. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, as quoted by John Kifner in 'Israelis and Palestinians Change Their Tactics but Not Their Goals', *New York Times*, 15 May 1988, p. 1.
359. See Dajani, *Eyes without Country*, op. cit.
360. Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock, 'The Revolutionary Transformation of the Palestinians under Occupation', in Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock (eds.), *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1990), p. 193.
361. Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, *PASSIA Diary* (Jerusalem: PASSIA), p. 253.

Leaflets issuing instructions to Palestinians began to appear soon after the rebellion began. It became clear, based on the third leaflet, that an anonymous self-proclaimed Unified National Leadership Command not only existed, but had adopted a program based upon the use of nonviolent direct action. The leadership contained within it local representatives from the four major political factions of the PLO and, although still vaguely understood, was a popularly backed coordinating mechanism. It transformed episodic spontaneous demonstrations into organized protest and called for a variety of nonviolent methods, such as mass resignations of police and civil servants from their jobs in the Israeli administration.[362] Palestinian restraint from using weaponry against Israelis reflected the intentional discipline of the uprising.[363] Day-to-day survival in the refugee camps and other communities was assisted by underground committees that had grown out of the preceding decades of popular mobilization. These committees were essential to the ability to carry out the demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and noncooperation of the uprising. Each was assigned to oversee an area, such as health, education, agriculture, food supplies and the media. The wide variety of tools employed included strikes, predetermined hours for opening and closing shops, the maintenance of backyard gardens and refusal to pay taxes. The choice of the term *intifada*, or 'shaking off', was itself linguistically nonviolent.[364]

A two-part analysis of the first thirty-nine leaflets of the uprising – the chief means of calling for actions – reveals that more than 90 percent of the appeals in the initial eighteen months of the *intifada* were for explicitly nonviolent methods. The leaflets, which were often distributed at mosques on Fridays and churches on Sundays, called for strikes, demonstrations, marches, the withholding of taxes and the boycott of Israeli products. The first seventeen leaflets contained an overwhelming majority of appeals for nonviolent action, including general strikes, local strikes, the raising of Palestinian flags, fasting and praying, the defiance of school closures, symbolic funerals, the ringing of church bells and the renaming of streets and schools. Of the twenty-seven methods of struggle suggested, twenty-six were explicitly nonviolent. Leaflet numbers 18 to 39 placed more emphasis on economic sanctions, along with political defiance and classic techniques of nonviolent resistance. In addition to more strikes, these also called for the cancellation of holiday celebrations, the applying of pressure for prisoner releases, appeals for family reunion, the formation of popular committees to provide for the

362. Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1988), p. 183.

363. Geoffrey Aronson, *Israel, Palestinians and the Intifada: Creating Facts on the West Bank* (London: Kegan Paul International, in association with the Institute for Palestine Studies, 1990), p. 329.

364. Jonathan Kuttab, interview with author, Jerusalem, 8 June 1988.

needs of the people and the resignation of all Palestinians from Israeli institutions. Only a small percentage of the leaflets called for actions that might be termed violent, that is, throwing stones or petrol bottles.[365]

The premise for the predominantly nonviolent strategy in the Palestinian *intifada* was the idea that military occupation is a web of connections between occupier and occupied, the majority of which are contacts sustained by the implied submission of those who are occupied, and only a minority of which are based on force. To end the occupation, the thinking went, one had to change the nature of cooperation and interaction, and thereby reveal to the international community the force and tactics used by the occupier.[366]

During the 1970s, the Pakistani political scientist Eqbal Ahmad had proposed to the PLO that 'highly organized nonviolent struggle' was the better alternative to armed struggle to secure political rights. He suggested large-scale events such as a procession of refugees similar to Gandhi's 1930 Salt March, funeral processions returning corpses to be buried in their ancestral villages and clogging offices with hunger strikers.[367] While the Palestinians later chose nonviolent tools from their own history, by November 1988, after less than one year of the *intifada*, dramatic evolutions in political thought were reflected in the official discourse.

Based on the United Nations' 1947 partition plan, Palestinian independence was declared by the nineteenth Palestinian National Council (PNC), meeting in Algiers in November 1988. Public statements from the gathering reflected a sea change; armed struggle was not mentioned. Previously, the Palestinians had refused to accept UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 – which spoke of the Palestinian issue as a 'refugee problem' rather than addressing the political aspirations of the Palestinians. In Algiers, the two resolutions were formally acknowledged by statements that implicitly recognized Israel. By December 1988, one year from the start of the *intifada*, PLO chairman Arafat renounced terrorism and granted explicit recognition of Israel.

The international news media not only reported and showed footage of the force used by Israel to maintain the occupation, they also became captivated by the nonviolent methods of the Palestinians. The *intifada*

365. Nafez Assaily, *Intifada: Palestinian Nonviolent Protest – An Affirmation of Human Dignity and Freedom: Analysis of the First 17 Leaflets* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, 1988); Hal Gangnath and Nafez Assaily, *Intifada: Palestinian Nonviolent Protest – An Affirmation of Human Dignity and Freedom*, Part 2: *Analysis of Leaflets 18–39* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, 1989).

366. Sari Nusseibeh, interview with author, Jerusalem, 28 January 1996.

367. Eqbal Ahmad, 'Yasser Arafat's Nightmare', *Middle East Report*, Vol. 13, No. 9 (1983), p. 21.

changed the image of the Palestinians because, noted one Israeli, it was a 'legitimate expression of a national will radically unlike the terrorism that is universally condemned'.[368] Even the throwing of stones by young Palestinians – which terrified the Israelis and damaged the possibilities for jiu-jitsu – led many to marvel. The world watched children with rocks challenging men with guns.

The political results brought about by the *intifada* surpassed anything the Palestinians had achieved since 1936. The Palestinians etched deeply in the international mind recognition of their rights. While the *intifada* did not bring an immediate end to military occupation, it did persuade many Israelis that the occupation was no longer viable.[369]

The period of the *intifada*'s greatest success was during its first two years, before Israeli actions removed those in the Palestinian leadership who thought nonviolent struggle preferable. The nonviolent leadership was lost to the arrests, detentions, torture, deaths and deportations of Palestinians whose fates were documented by reputable Israeli, European, North American and Palestinian research institutes.[370] Voices calling for violence – against Israelis and also against Palestinians who collaborated with the occupation – gained the upper hand. The remarkably unified adherence to nonviolent strategies of the first two years broke down. When this happened, openings were created for Islamic extremists and others, who, having become active in the early days of the *intifada*, grew in significance. Some factions had been opposed to the nonviolent strategy from the outset, and they benefited from the loss of the original leadership.

The PLO had the loyalty of the populace, but it was not the ignition that started the *intifada*. 'The people were showing us the way,' admitted Bassam Abu Sharif, an adviser to Yasir Arafat.[371] Not always accurately reading the situation in the territories, the PLO often played into the hands of those Israelis who chose to portray the rebellion as a violent insurrection controlled from the outside. When the PLO spoke of youth in the *intifada* as military 'generals', it reinforced an Israeli perspective

368. Ezrahi, 'Under Jerusalem's Barren Mulberry Tree', op. cit.

369. Yossi Klein Halevi, 'How Arafat Uses Hamas', *New York Times*, 14 March 1996.

370. According to Kifner, six months into the uprising, 166 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces. Kifner, 'Israelis and Palestinians Change Their Tactics', op. cit., p. 1. According to retrospective analyses: 'In . . . [the] period marked by the revolt of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, military action resembled repression. Officially authorized assassination was used against rebel leaders, torture became an accepted tool of interrogation, and freelance violence by settlers against Palestinians grew.' Daniel Williams, 'Israelis Fear Growing Political Divide: Disputes over Palestinian Self-Rule Called Likely to Intensify', *Washington Post*, 11 November 1995, p. A21.

371. Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies: The Memoirs of Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1995), p. 227.

that mistakenly viewed the civil uprising as a military challenge, rather than as a convergence that had attained its results through a historic throwback to earlier nonviolent methods recontextualized by Husseini, Awad, Nusseibeh and others. What violence did occur, such as the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, constituted between 5 and 15 percent of the activities of the *intifada*.[372] Whatever the fraction, it was sufficient to weaken the rebellion's impact. More systematic adherence to nonviolent techniques, beyond the first two years, might have produced broader and quicker results for the Palestinians. Experience has shown that 'not only does violence mix poorly with nonviolent action, but even the contemplation of opportunistic violence weakens the effectiveness of strategic nonviolent conflict'.[373] Moreover, the smallest use of violence provides justification for disproportionate retaliation.

Still, a main lesson from the *intifada* should not be missed: it is never too late to turn to nonviolence. Not until the adoption of nonviolent techniques did the milk of international human kindness begin to flow toward the Palestinian people. As Henry Kissinger concluded, 'Israel's inability to crush the intifada in the West Bank and Gaza left it with four options: ethnic cleansing, an apartheid state, incorporating the Arab population into the Jewish state or some form of agreed separation of the two communities – a Palestinian entity.'[374] It is the last option that is the major legacy of the *intifada*, because it was the uprising and the thinking behind it that introduced the political tools for both Palestinians and Israelis to visualize a solution that did not rely on the elimination of the other. Both sides learned the futility of military solutions and that a settlement requires compromise from all parties involved. As the conversation below suggests, one of the early vehicles for transportation on the long journey to coexistence and mutual recognition of rights was the use of nonviolent methods in the *intifada*.

372. Assaily, *Intifada: Palestinian Nonviolent Protest – An Affirmation of Human Dignity and Freedom*, op. cit.; Kaufman, 'The Intifadah's Limited Violence', op. cit., pp. 109–21.

373. Richard A. Nenneman, 'How "People Power" Can Triumph over Military Might', review of Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), in *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 January 1994, p. 15.

374. Henry Kissinger, 'Retooling the Peace Process', *Washington Post*, 1 July 1996, p. A17.

Edy Kaufman and Mubarak Awad: a conversation[375]

In the spring of 1988, early in the *intifada*, Professor Edy Kaufman, director of the Truman Institute at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, had invited Mubarak Awad, director of the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, to address his course on human rights. As soon as Awad stepped on stage to speak, he was arrested by Israeli authorities. Almost eight years later, in a candid conversation in an old hotel in Jerusalem, these two friends – one Israeli and one Palestinian – discussed the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the role played by nonviolent direct action in the area, as well as in their relationship.

On nonviolence

Mubarak Awad: Gene Sharp called me and said there is a fellow by the name of Edy Kaufman, who teaches at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, that I would like you to talk to.

Edy Kaufman: I really found it very appealing, very attractive to find a Palestinian who thought that nonviolence was the right strategy to fight Israeli occupation. I was very fascinated by the thinking. . . . I found it very attractive that Mubarak thought that it was worth trying nonviolence first. On that I agree; before you go to violence, at least you should make an extraordinary effort to try nonviolence.

Mubarak Awad: Edy was struggling with the whole concept of nonviolence. . . . I think, after so many years, now he has started realizing that the whole concept of conflict resolution and nonviolence is very meaningful.

Edy Kaufman: With the *intifada*, unfortunately [after its first two years], things moved the other way more and more. Stone throwing was considered to be limited violence . . . but in the long run, it paved the way for the use of a lot of violence against Israelis, but mostly Palestinians against each other.

Mubarak Awad: Edy has his idea of 'limited violence'. That's his term. We didn't use those terms. . . . In the beginning, the *intifada* was really directed at ourselves. . . . I don't know where to put the line of where violence becomes limited or limited violence. My only appeal to the opponent, from the time we started, was the acceptance of the concept of the two-state solution – that is, a state for Israelis and a state for Palestinians.

Edy Kaufman: The idea that there is a middle category of limited violence, in between nonviolence and full violence, which could appeal to a lot of people – 'why do we have to be extreme and go one way or another?' – is dangerous. Palestinians stress more the word 'limited' and Israelis stress more the word

375. Mubarak Awad and Edy Kaufman, interview with the author, Jerusalem, 23 January 1996.

'violence'. . . . It's a concept that is in a way dangerous. If you are nonviolent, there is no compromise.

Mubarak Awad: The PLO wanted to run the *intifada*, . . . and they couldn't understand throwing stones as violence. They would say, 'Why is this violence, when the Israelis have tanks and guns?'

Edy Kaufman: The Palestinians called it 'the children with the stones'. The Israelis called it 'the grown-ups with the rocks'.

Mubarak Awad would subsequently be arrested and deported for his advocacy of nonviolent resistance. He spent the first week of his arrest in the dank prison of Muscobiyya, also known as the Russian Compound, located in the heart of the business district of West Jerusalem. Held in solitary confinement, what bothered him most was the lightbulb that burned twenty-four hours a day in a cell with no windows. Outside in the parking lot of the compound, under an old and gracious mulberry tree, Edy Kaufman sat in a show of solidarity with his Palestinian friend imprisoned inside.

Hunger strike

Edy Kaufman: I was very upset. Very, very upset with the Israeli Government . . . who took the decision to deport Mubarak and, in the process of deporting him, put him in jail. I was extremely upset because I thought it was the worst thing to do when you try to find a solution to conflict to take the one who is advocating nonviolence.

Mubarak Awad: I was on the inside of the prison, so I didn't know anything except what people told me was going on outside. I decided I would go on a hunger strike because I felt I had been treated very unfairly . . . in solitary confinement.

Edy Kaufman: I didn't see myself, perhaps as a matter of age, chaining myself in protest to the prison gate. . . . Nancy Nye, his wife, called and told us that [the lawyer] Jonathan Kuttab went to visit Mubarak and was told that he had started a hunger strike. The moment I heard he had started a hunger strike, I said, 'Well, this is exactly what I could do!' . . . I think it's a wonderful thing to show solidarity.

Mubarak Awad: I was arrested in the middle of the night, and the second day I decided I would not eat, not cooperate, not talk to them, until I had the presence of an attorney. . . . The one who influenced me to stop was Jonathan Kuttab. Jonathan told me, 'Look, you are fat enough, you could survive the hunger strike, but there are people outside, like Edy, who are skinny, who are dying.' And that's the only reason I stopped the hunger strike.

Edy Kaufman: There was a little spot with a tree, a mulberry tree. It was the only place cars could not park. So that's where we put ourselves, just opposite the prison where he was. Symbolically, he was inside, and I was outside, and there was the wall of the prison separating us. . . . The mulberry tree became a political place.

Edy Kaufman's son was in the Israeli military forces at the time and happened by the mulberry tree one day, clad in full military dress uniform. Seeing the placards and pickets of several dozen Israeli and Palestinian protesters milling around, his attention was attracted to the tree, where he found his father in the midst of his hunger strike. The son ended up spending the afternoon with his father under the tree, in ceremonial dress uniform. Kaufman wrote at the time, 'Judaism teaches not only, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" but also "Love thy neighbour as thyself".'[376]

Mubarak Awad: I was so upset. Why would Edy have a hunger strike, because of me? . . . [He is] a Jew. It really annoyed me in the beginning. I felt he did it so that I would stop the hunger strike. Then I had to realize that he did it as a friend. I had all kinds of questions about his motives. . . . I don't think that there was any motive except support, but when I was in prison, I thought, they don't even let me enjoy my hunger strike! [Laughter]

After establishing the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, Awad's first step was to translate into Arabic materials on the theories and methods of nonviolent struggle. These included a biography of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as Badshah Khan. The translated biography serves as an introduction for the Palestinians to Gandhian thinking and is taken from the book *A Man to Match His Mountains.* Written by Eknath Easwaran, it concerns the Muslim leader of a militantly nonviolent movement against the British in the 1930s. Khan later became an adviser to Gandhi.[377]

Gandhi's legacy

Edy Kaufman: I think the impact of Gandhian strategic thinking [in Israel] was very small. . . . Those who were involved in the support of a nonviolent movement in Israel were in the tens – I mean, I don't even think in the hundreds. So I don't feel there was a numeric impact [from Gandhi's ideas]. I think for the Jews, after the trauma of the Holocaust . . . the idea that you don't fight back is not a proper idea. . . . People know about Gandhi. People know about Martin Luther King. Many people admire them for what they have done, but they will respond this is a very violent part of the world.

Mubarak Awad: I think [the Gandhian campaigns and the American civil rights movement] have been very relevant. I was very intrigued by the Gandhian concepts. I can understand [your] point that Israelis find the concept of nonretaliation – not to fight back – difficult. And I could see it with some of our activities with Israelis. Yet, when we don't fight back, they don't like it. They prefer us to throw stones and aggravate them, so that they can

376. Edy Kaufman, 'Why a Jew Fasted for an Arab', *Jerusalem Post*, 19 May 1988, p. 8.
377. Eknath Easwaran, *A Man to Match His Mountains: Badshah Khan, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam* (Petaluma, California: Nilgiri Press, 1984).

fight us. Really, there is a mentality that they have to fight. They were unable to handle us when we didn't fight. Even in prison, when you know that they are going to harass you and you do nothing, they don't know how to handle you.

Nonviolence and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict today

Edy Kaufman: A real adherence to nonviolence – now that would really help the peace process a great deal.

Mubarak Awad: There have been lots of lasting effects from the introduction of nonviolent strategic thinking here: the whole peace process, and accepting Israel, and dealing with Israelis in negotiation, accepting and recognizing them. . . . The idea that 'I have to live, and you have to live', . . . with all of our difficulties with each other. If the people have knowledge of this today, it is as a result of nonviolence.

The struggle of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala

Our strength lies in the strength of the people themselves.
Rigoberta Menchú[378]

200,000 Mayans killed

Since the first colonial settlers arrived in the midst of Guatemala's Mayan civilization in the sixteenth century, the indigenous peoples of the mountains have struggled to hold onto their heritage, land and survival. In recent times, the descendants of the Mayans have suffered under successive regimes that are considered by analysts to have the worst human rights records in all of the Western Hemisphere.

Perhaps 200,000 unarmed Indians have been killed by the Guatemalan military services, in the 'near-genocidal slaughter of Guatemala's Mayan majority', during the past four decades. Among 'the world's most violent and repressive nations', Guatemala has been under virtually continuous military rule since 1954, when the United States intervened to oust the popularly elected Jacobo Arbenz.[379] Guerrilla warfare started six years later, making Guatemala's the last, longest and deadliest civil war in Central America. In the period since, it has been broadly acknowledged that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) orchestrated the military action against the Arbenz government, after approval by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.[380]

378. Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, trans. by Ann Wright (London: Verso Books, 1984), p. 233.
379. Editorial, 'Peace by Piece in Guatemala', *New York Times*, 23 September 1996, p. A13.
380. Susanne Jonas, 'Dangerous Liaisons: The U.S. in Guatemala', *Foreign Policy*, No. 103 (Summer 1996), p. 146; Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1982; repr. 1990), pp. 108, 170.

In the context of the cold war, Eisenhower claimed that the operation meant 'throwing off the yoke of communism'.[381]

Guatemala's military leaders, perhaps intent on polarizing the society, offered a choice to Guatemalans of either a communist revolution or their existing dictatorship. In this way, anyone not sympathetic to the regime could be labeled pro-communist and, therefore, an enemy.[382] Consecutive civilian-run governments were manipulated by the powerful military as it warred against the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, or Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, the guerrilla forces. Recent disclosures in both the legislative and executive branches of government in Washington, D.C., have verified the relationship in which 'over the last 40 years, the US government, via the CIA, has supported the Guatemalan security services in their efforts to defeat a leftist guerrilla insurgency'.[383] According to Department of Defense sources, this included training programs, in which the Guatemalan military participated, that 'advocated executions, torture, blackmail and other forms of coercion against insurgents'.[384]

The army's fight against guerrilla cadres – which numbered perhaps a few thousand – resulted in more than 200,000 orphans and 80,000 widows, and displaced more than 1 million persons, most of them from the indigenous clans that comprise 60 percent of the population.[385] An additional 40,000 persons fall into the category of *desaparecidos*, the 'disappeared'. For decades, disappearances, massacres and torture came, tragically, to be considered regular practices in Guatemala.[386] Massacres in more than 440 villages left the settlements burned to the ground.[387] Credible journalists leave no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Guatemalan deaths were caused by an intrusive counterinsurgency army.

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381. David Wise and Thomas Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 189; 'Damn Good and Sure', *Newsweek*, 4 March 1963, p. 19, quoted in Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, op. cit., p. 170.
382. Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, op. cit., p. 251.
383. 'The CIA in Guatemala; Its Paid Informants Included Assassins, Kidnappers and Torturers', *Washington Post*, 7 July 1996, p. C4.
384. Diana Priest, 'U.S. Instructed Latins on Executions, Torture; Army Training Manuals Urged Executions, Torture as Coercion', *Washington Post*, 21 September 1996, p. A9.
385. Jonas, 'Dangerous Liaisons', op. cit., p. 146; Tom Weiner, 'Guatemalan Leaders Covered Up American's Killing, U.S. Decides', *New York Times*, 24 March 1996, p. A1; John Ward Anderson, 'Guatemala Consolidates Civilian Rule over Army; Guatemalans Awaiting Formal End of Civil War', *Washington Post*, 3 December 1996, p. A17.
386. Frank Smyth, 'The Nun Who Knew Too Much: Dianna Ortiz Links This North American Man to Her Rape and Torture in Guatemala', *Washington Post*, 12 May 1996, p. C1.
387. Frank LaRue, Guatemala Information, Education and Documentation Center/Center for Human Rights Legal Action, interview with author, Washington, D.C., 9 October 1996.

Thus it is that Mayan communities have, through these many years, lived in fear. In April 1982, for example, the army swept through mountain villages killing alleged leftists as part of the 'scorched earth' policy of General Efrain Rios Montt, who governed Guatemala during 1982 and 1983. Anthropologists later found the burned remains of 167 people in a clandestine cemetery in the highland village of Agua Fria, outside of Uspantan in the state of Quiché, perhaps fifty miles northwest of the capital city.[388] The corpses were the result of a killing spree, as the army pushed through the highlands torching villages. Numerous travesties under successive right-wing dictatorships and puppet regimes sought systematically to quell the Indian peoples or eliminate them.

Rigoberta Menchú

One Mayan Indian woman of the Quiché tribe has experienced the worst that the dictatorships have had to offer. Rigoberta Menchú, born in 1959, lost her childhood when right-wing governments sought to crush the indigenous people of Guatemala. Unable to attend school, she worked in fields where she was sprayed with pesticides.[389] One of her brothers died from inhaling pesticides.[390] This tragedy later provoked her to comment: 'The indigenous are condemned to live in a situation designed to exterminate them.'[391]

Vincente Menchú, Rigoberta's father, was a community leader who fought long and hard for the right to inherit land and other inalienable rights of the indigenous people; one of his efforts involved assisting in the creation of a clandestine group called the Committee of Peasant Unity,

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388. 'Remains of 167 People Found in Guatemala', *New York Times*, 28 February 1996, p. A4.

389. While there are twenty-two different ethnic groups of Mayan Indians living in Guatemala – the majority of the population – Mayans constitute only 25 percent of enrollment in elementary schools. Young Mayan females normally receive an average of less than one year of formal education – as compared to approximately four years of schooling received by the country's nonindigenous females. Molly Moore, 'Mayan Girls Make Fifth-Grade History', *Washington Post*, 20 June 1996. As ancient communities were destroyed, those who were not killed were sometimes relocated to government-created villages, where intensive agricultural work, including child labor, yielded them little compensation. See 'Rigoberta Menchú', in Judith Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1993* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1993), pp. 398–9; Hector Tobar, 'Rigoberta Menchu's Mayan Vision', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 January 1994, p. 16.

390. 'Rigoberta Menchú', in Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1993,* op. cit., p. 399.

391. Anders Riis-Hansen, Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America, 'Five Hundred Years of Sacrifice before Alien Gods: 1992 Interview with Rigoberta Menchu Tum', Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America (CODEHUCA), 1992.

more commonly known by its Spanish acronym, CUC.[392] Rigoberta's father, arrested for his activism, returned from a fifteen-day stay in prison filled with ideas for uniting the peasants, reclaiming the land that had been confiscated from them, and for fighting the injustice of the political system. Menchú began at eighteen years of age to travel to the highland villages with her father, and alongside him to counsel communities on the issues of land rights and political participation.[393] From his example, and through her travels with him, Rigoberta came to realize that the struggle of the native Guatemalans would not be easily won.

In 1978, CUC brought its activities into the open. The organization and its ideas began rapidly taking root in the Guatemalan countryside, garnering the support of the nation's poor and downtrodden. Communities banded together, held meetings, signed petitions and requested the building of schools. Many traveled outside their own villages to help unite peasants elsewhere.[394] The entire Menchú family had by this time become active in the organization, and Rigoberta decided that she would need a good command of languages other than her own local tongue. This would enable her to fully assist in the efforts of CUC. Menchú determined that 'each one of us is responsible for the struggle' and decided that she needed to prepare herself. In her estimation, leaders were needed who were willing to endure the same risks as the people;[395] besides, she had found her anger rising when patronizing pity was expressed about the pathetic Indians and how they did not know how to speak. More importantly, inadequacy in Spanish had often meant that the wrong people had been the ones who had stepped forward to represent the Indians. By the age of twenty-one, Rigoberta had learned to read, write and speak Spanish and had achieved proficiency in three Indian dialects in addition to her first local tongue.

Menchú often recalled the occasion when the inhabitants of her village ran into the hills fleeing from advancing troops, and a fourteen-year-old girl stepped forward and volunteered to act as a decoy. The teenager walked flirtatiously toward approaching soldiers, the first ranks of whom were secret police and soldiers in disguise without weapons. After the armed soldiers had come through the emptied village, she was able, without being raped, to lure one of the stragglers at the end of the formation to talk with her, at which point other villagers surrounded him and demanded that he drop his weapons. He did so, and the villagers had possession of his grenade, cartridge belt, pistol, rifle and other gear. They took the disarmed soldier to the Menchú home, where, particularly, the women of the village asked

392. Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, op. cit., p. 115; 'Rigoberta Menchú', in Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1993,* op. cit., p. 400.
393. Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, op. cit., pp. 114, 115.
394. Ibid., p. 120.
395. Ibid., p. 228.

the soldier to return to the army with the message that they should think of their Mayan ancestors. The soldier was an Indian, like them, but from another ethnic clan. The women asked how he had become an enemy to his own people and pleaded with him to be a light within his camp. The villagers were torn with indecision. They knew that releasing the young soldier could mean the massacre of their entire community, but they also wanted to make an attempt to change the minds of the soldiers. Some wanted to turn the soldier's own guns on him, but they did not know how to fire them. Ultimately, the soldier was let go, but he was subsequently shot and killed by his own troops, who labeled him an informer and said that since he had abandoned his rifle, he must die. While the village was anxious when they learned the news of the soldier's death, they were at the same time inspired by their own courage. 'This was the village's first action and we were happy,' recalls Menchú. 'We now had two guns, we had a grenade, and we had a cartridge belt, but we didn't know how to use them, nobody knew. . . . From then on the army was afraid to come to our [particular] villages.'[396]

The biblical stories of her Roman Catholic upbringing taught Menchú that 'it is the duty of Christians to create the kingdom of God on earth'. She has criticized the silence of the established church in the face of the countless atrocities over the years at government instigation, which included the deaths of twelve priests. Yet she also acknowledges she has known priests who understood that 'the people weren't communists but hungry', clerics who 'joined our people's struggle'.[397] She regards the Bible as her inspiration for the view that self-defense is necessary because 'being a Christian means refusing to accept all the injustices'.[398] In this spirit, her village devised counterattacks to prevent the army from razing villages and torturing, raping and killing the inhabitants. These simple strategies, which she calls 'people's weapons', included diversions, disguises, stones, sticks, chile pepper and salt. Villagers also used Molotov cocktails in lemonade bottles, catapults that had been used to keep birds away from maize fields and machetes. With these modest exploratory efforts and using innovative ways to protect themselves, the goal was usually to separate the soldiers from their weapons.[399] Menchú and her fellow villagers spread these haphazard and small-scale common-sense techniques of self-defense to other villages: 'Teaching others how to defend themselves against the enemy was a commitment I had to make – a commitment to my people and my commitment as a Christian.'[400]

396. Ibid., pp. 136–9.
397. Ibid., pp. 134, 235.
398. Ibid., p. 134.
399. Ibid., p. 135.
400. Ibid., p. 141.

Propaganda bombs and lightning meetings

In early 1980, Menchú had the traumatic ordeal of watching her brother, mother and father being murdered by government forces for their efforts to resist suppression.[401] Though Menchú's family was lost, their killings left behind an intensified legacy of commitment and conviction in their daughter and sister. At twenty-one years of age, she picked up where her father and mother had left off and began even more systematically to encourage struggle against the government, intensifying the number and duration of her journeys into villages to teach methods of resistance. Meanwhile, the activities of the CUC broadened to include strikes, demonstrations and days of commemoration to mark massacres – techniques similar to Gandhian *hartals* – to raise consciousness.

These types of activities were carried out while Menchú was working with the CUC, although she was still a farm worker laboring on a *finca*, or plantation. The CUC and other groups organized a strike in which 80,000 peasants, mostly cotton and sugar plantation workers, paralyzed the coastal strip in the southern part of the country for fifteen days in February 1980. Some began to use a controversial form of unarmed protest in which parts of machines are lost or broken – to reduce the productivity of the adversary. 'That's when the repression really began . . . in all the most militant Indian zones', as in towns and parks armored cars planted by the army fired ammunition at homes and bombed houses. The year her family was killed, any lingering reluctance on the part of the military to use weaponry against laborers, industrial workers and peasants was abandoned, and when a protest demonstration was held in the capital, the army opened fire on the unarmed protesters. 'What they wanted', Menchú declares, 'was to exterminate the population once and for all.' While the priests tried to maintain the morale of the Indian communities, the people suddenly realized that the army was using napalm bombs against them.[402]

'Propaganda bombs' were developed by the CUC as a mass tool aimed at weakening the government economically, politically and militarily. The 'bombs' were in fact the extremely intense and rapid distribution of leaflets to explain protests. Along with the leaflets there were 'lightning meetings' – fast, nonviolent actions completed in a matter of minutes to avoid a massacre. 'We were organized in such a way that the . . . propaganda [would be] given out, and the meeting held . . . at the same time', according to Menchú.[403] The widening scope of their protests left the participants in even greater danger, and many were forced into hiding. Menchú eventually

401. Herbert Buchsbaum, 'Extraordinary People: Human Rights Workers Rigoberta Menchu, Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi', *Scholastic Update*, 3 December 1993, p. 6.

402. Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, op. cit., p. 230.

403. Ibid., p. 232.

Rigoberta Menchú, 33 years of age, receiving the 1992 Nobel Prize for Peace in Oslo, Norway, for her work for peace and reconciliation in the struggle of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala against the Guatemalan army.
(Photo: Arne Knudsen/Knudsen Fotosenter/Norwegian Nobel Institute)

Rigoberta Menchú being interviewed by the author, Washington, D.C., September 1996.
(Photo: Beverly A. Orr)

had to leave Guatemala for Mexico in 1981, as she continued narrowly to miss arrest. From exile, her efforts continued. By developing international contacts, she carried out a campaign to educate those who were unaware of the plight of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala.[404] Part of the endeavor included publication of her autobiography *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, in 1983, a chronicle of her life as an Indian woman in Guatemala.

Menchú has for several years advocated an accord between the government and the Indian peoples, yet she is quick to assert that such an agreement cannot be successful unless based on the satisfaction of the discontented. Arguing that there can be no peace as long as there is tyranny, Menchú helped to found the National Committee for Reconciliation in 1987. This nonprofit organization has worked for a negotiated settlement between the government and the Indians.[405]

Self-defense can be nonviolent

Menchú's actions and comments about the need for self-defense created speculation in some quarters regarding her beliefs, with some charging that she advocated violent interventions rather than nonviolent resistance. Conjecture was at its greatest when it was announced, in 1992, that Menchú had won the Nobel Prize for Peace. Because she had grown up in mountainous regions, she had early been acquainted with the maneuvers of guerrilla forces and their military methods. In her youth, she had often observed that those who were most vehemently trying to resist the dirty tactics of the army tended to fight for their rights with violence. Even though this exposure did not mean that she advocated sabotage and guerrilla warfare, some critics contended that her witnessing of such practices concealed a predisposition toward violence, which should have precluded her from receiving an honor such as the Nobel Prize.

It had actually taken some years for Menchú to work out for herself a clear alternative to the military-type operations she had observed and to choose nonviolent resistance. The 'people's weapons' had grown out of a realization that 'our strength lies in the strength of the people themselves . . . using all our resources'.[406] Eventually, her search brought her to the strategies of Mahatma Gandhi and the militant nonviolence of the Indian *satyagraha* campaigns. Menchú's odyssey had led her to insist that 'changes must come not from additional fighting but from nonviolent activism in the Gandhi tradition'.[407]

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404. John Nichols, 'Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu Brings to Madison a Bold Voice for Native Peoples', *Capital Times*, 2 October 1995, p. 1D.
405. 'Rigoberta Menchú', in Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1993,* op. cit., p. 399.
406. Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, op. cit., p. 233.
407. Nichols, 'Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu', op. cit., p. 1D.

When the 1992 peace prize was awarded to Menchú, especially for her work on behalf of indigenous peoples, the Nobel Committee declared:

> She has always borne in mind that the long-term objective of the struggle is peace. Today, Rigoberta Menchú stands out as a vivid symbol of peace and reconciliation across ethnic, cultural, and social dividing lines, in her own country, on the American continent and in the world.[408]

Wearing the traditional dress of her Mayan culture, Rigoberta accepted the honor and the $1.2 million cash award. In her remarks she declared:

> It is with both sadness and anticipation in meeting you to receive the Nobel Prize of Peace that I observe that the prize itself must stay in safe-keeping in Mexico City, until peace comes to Guatemala. . . .
>
> I interpret this prize primarily as respectful homage to sacrificed and disappeared indigenous peoples, and in honor of the aspiration for a more dignified life, just, free, with respect and understanding between peoples – [in respectful homage to] those no longer living or seeking shelter – [in respectful homage to mutual, nonviolent] change instead of poverty, marginalization, exile, and abandonment, in Guatemala, and in all the Americas.[409]

With the prize money, the thirty-three-year-old Guatemalan founded the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation, the objective of which is to make human rights and education for indigenous people a reality throughout the Americas.[410] She has also tried consciously to exploit her notoriety and international recognition as a way of drawing attention to the condition of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, as well as those inhabiting other continents. Characteristically, she spurns congratulations and, instead, encourages others to work toward substantive change, rather than simply giving applause.[411]

There is little about the life of Rigoberta Menchú that has not stirred curiosity and contention and, in 1993, she managed to be once again at the center of yet another battle. Menchú courted government reprisal by insisting on proceeding with the first Summit of Indigenous Peoples, to be held in a small town just outside of Guatemala City, in May and June of that year, despite official objection. More than 200 delegates from all over the world were in danger of being sent home when then-President Jorge Serrano declared martial law in reaction to an attempted coup d'état. The crackdown included a ban on the right of assembly. Menchú declared that the global conference would continue as planned.

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408. Ibid.
409. 'Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speeches – Selections', *International Journal of Nonviolence,* Vol. 3 (1996–97), p. 204.
410. 'Rigoberta Menchú', in Graham (ed.), *Current Biography Yearbook, 1993,* op. cit., p. 401.
411. Nichols, 'Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu', op. cit., p. 1D.

The delegates held their summit and Menchú led a peaceful march of 1,000 people to the gates of the national seat of government, demanding the reinstatement of freedoms – yet more acts of civil disobedience against the military junta and martial law.[412]

In the mid-1990s, some of the ingredients necessary for ending the civil war and moving toward reconciliation appeared increasingly to be within reach. Credible international news organizations and members of the US Congress raised questions about the past involvement of US governmental intelligence services with military officers suspected of kidnapping, torture, political assassinations and extrajudicial killings. In 1996, a sixty-seven-page report was issued by a four-person advisory panel, appointed by President Bill Clinton, which disclosed that the CIA had paid informants who, over the years, were known to have violated human rights. It also concluded that the agency had broken the law in failing to keep the Congress informed of its activities in Guatemala.[413] Such revelations, the end of cold war justifications for such relationships and belated admissions cannot undo past injustices, nor can they bring back the massacred, murdered and disappeared. Yet, they are crucially important for the eventual resolution of the tragedy that befell Guatemala's indigenous peoples for two generations. Acknowledgments of collusion are an obligatory starting point for Guatemalan reconstruction.

For herself, Menchú continues to counsel all nations on the importance of recognizing the needs and rights of native-born inhabitants. 'I deeply believe that the solution to . . . armed conflict lies in concrete approaches to human rights and the dignity of indigenous peoples,' she says, attributing her sustained energy to the momentum created by the Mayans at the grass roots.[414] The nonviolent resistance of the Indians of Guatemala has not only been a significant factor in stanching bloodshed and killings, it has also laid the foundation for the eventual democratization and development of the country. Those who had formerly regarded themselves as the subjugated have taken on the task of bringing about change.[415] Their assumption of responsibility and familiarity with nonviolent direct action make it less likely that there will be future civil wars in Guatemala. The choice of the indigenous peoples is no longer between passivity or elimination, it is between various methods and techniques of nonviolent struggle. This knowledge is expressed by Rigoberta Menchú:

412. Tobar, 'Rigoberta Menchu's Mayan Vision', op. cit., p. 16.
413. Tim Weiner, 'Report Faults CIA on Hiring of Informers in Guatemala', *New York Times*, 29 June 1996, p. 2; R. Jeffrey Smith, 'Panel Confirms CIA Officials Knew of Abuses', *Washington Post*, 29 June 1996, p. A1.
414. Riis-Hansen, 'Five Hundred Years of Sacrifice before Alien Gods', op. cit.
415. Nichols, 'Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchu', op. cit., p. 1D.

We have learned that change cannot come through war. War is not a feasible tool to use in fighting against the oppression we face. War has caused more problems. We cannot embrace that path.[416]

Interview with Rigoberta Menchú[417]

Mary King: The long civil war in Guatemala has now come to a close, and you are moving toward formal peace accords. How have you been able to struggle for so many years?

Rigoberta Menchú: I was born into the conflict. I am precisely as old as the conflict. As young people, we were taught to defend ourselves and to participate in our struggle. We were involved in peasant movements, women's efforts and, particularly, the efforts of the widows. The widows were able to speak with the utmost dignity because they were widows – they had paid such a high price. . . . The participation of the people is extremely significant in terms of seeking solutions to our problems. We know that peace is not just a matter of signing papers and negotiating, but is a matter of truly involving people in the complicated process of working for peace.

Mary King: As I watched the reports of the news media about your meetings with Guatemalan military generals and the Ministry of Defense, what I found most intriguing was your consistent spirit of nonretaliation. Is this a deliberate effort on your part not to injure or insult those who have caused you so much pain?

Rigoberta Menchú: This is a new moment and is very different from the past. In the past, there was a very intense conflict. There was no dialogue whatsoever; it was a dialogue between rifles. . . . As recently as three years ago, we never would have thought it possible for a military man in Guatemala and a guerrilla commander in Guatemala to be present at the same table and to shake hands. What has happened in this intervening period is that there has been a tremendous increase in civic participation to bring pressure to bear on the combatants to bring about a negotiated solution, a dialogued solution. . . . I think this form of civic participation, of people getting involved and seeking solutions, is critical to the development of democracy. I believe that we must struggle together to bring it about, but not with a spirit of revenge or retaliation.

Mary King: The US Government has officially begun to admit its complicity in thirty-six years of devastating war against the indigenous people of Guatemala, and the Defense Department claims that training in human rights is, instead, newly part of its efforts to encourage military professionalism in the hemisphere. How do you see the responsibility of the Guatemalan military for its past tyranny and oppression?

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416. Ibid.

417. Rigoberta Menchú, interview with author, trans. by Janet Shenk, Washington, D.C., 25 September 1996.

Rigoberta Menchú: We have a very serious problem with the government's desire to give members of the military services exemption from punishment or penalty – in other words impunity. In order for us to continue the struggle against such impunity, we need to open every space imaginable. If there are military who want to participate in our struggle against impunity, they should be included as well. We don't want the crimes that have been committed to go unpunished. We have a right to the truth, and the truth is massacres and secret cemeteries. The victims in Guatemala number in the tens of thousands. It is not a question of one little village or one small group of people. We cannot forget this past. Nor do we believe that reconciliation means forgetting the past. We are not going to accept laws that throw a blanket of silence over all of this. I think the victims have a right to have justice, and we must struggle together to bring this about, but not with revenge.

If I want to bring to justice the people responsible for the massacre at the Spanish Embassy, where my father died, I should have that opportunity. I should be able to have faith in the justice system. But if the judicial system has been 'bought' by the military – purchased – if it has been corrupted, then no one can ever have faith in their right to justice. I think that there are as yet no judges that are energetically struggling for a real judicial system. That's what I mean by this very special moment – there is a struggle between those that want to preserve a system of intolerance and oppression and those who want to bring about a democratic state. There are still things we cannot foresee; for instance, how will the issues of reconciliation and human rights be dealt with? I can seek reconciliation for myself, but what about the thousands of orphans, thousands of widows, the tens of thousands of people hurt by the oppression?

Mary King: Were there any outside influences that helped to shape you when you were growing up, especially as you began to be aware that yours would be a life of struggle?

Rigoberta Menchú: First of all, the influence of Martin Luther King has been paramount because – particularly as indigenous people – the issue of racism, of feeling marginalized, was very intense. We celebrated the great ideals symbolized by great leaders, great people. For me personally, Mahatma Gandhi was also an important influence – that of rediscovering the rationality of human beings and revealing the need to search for other mechanisms apart from weapons in seeking solutions.

Mary King: How did you actually learn about Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King?

Rigoberta Menchú: There is one thing that isn't fully appreciated – oral education. People talk about Gandhi and King. I learned about them by hearing other people talk about them, by word of mouth. Formal study of their texts is one great way of learning, but there is another: by osmosis, by hearing communities talking about them. These discussions have particularly had

an impact on youth – that is, those of us who have grown up in the last twenty or thirty years. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are our symbols, our heroes, our examples. Young people always ask me about them.

Mary King: I want to explore this further. With regard to Gandhi, you mentioned the rationality of human beings, meaning in other words that it is possible to persuade your opponent?

Rigoberta Menchú: I think that nonviolence is one way of saying that there are other ways to solve problems, not only through weapons and war. Nonviolence also means the recognition that the person on one side of the trench and the person on the other side of the trench are both human beings, with the same faculties. At some point, they have to begin to understand one another. . . . Since violence in society is already there, I think the opponents are each responsible for developing a sense that dialogue can bear fruit.

Mary King: Were there any other influences on your convictions about the necessity for nonviolent struggle?

Rigoberta Menchú: The Bible had a great deal of influence – its message of liberation, its call to celebrate life, and the example of the life of Christ. Just as for many people Martin Luther King is not a myth, but a real person – an example, a source of great strength – for many of us the life of Christ is not something far away in the past, but is a constant source of strength in the present moment. The Guatemalan people are profoundly religious, and our faith is with us always as we seek to make change.

Mary King: Is your own Mayan tradition a source of strength and power?

Rigoberta Menchú: Our language is one of our sources of power. We are going to speak our own language. We are not going to adopt the language of those who carry the weapons. The importance of our ancestors and of our cultural identity is quite significant for our community and, because of this, the community is able to maintain itself – despite the challenges imposed by the armed conflict.

If in Guatemala there hadn't been popular social struggles, if there hadn't been the taking of risks – because the risks were enormous and continue to be enormous – then the dictatorship would have triumphed, and racism and intolerance would have triumphed. But the people have been very courageous. If we had not struggled, the indigenous peoples might have been totally eliminated and destroyed.

A sense of balance is a very important value to indigenous communities, and if there is nothing but war, there is no balance. There must be something positive to balance the pain and suffering.

Mary King: If war is not a feasible tool for use in fighting oppression, as you have said elsewhere, do you have a substitute?

Rigoberta Menchú: All wars have certain elements in common, particularly the victims that are left as an outgrowth of the hostilities. Also, the atmosphere in times of war leaves no possibility for intermediaries to function, for anyone to move back and forth between the two poles. In Guatemala during

all these years, you either had to be part of one band or another. If you were not part of one band, then you were considered to be with the enemy, and vice versa. Another result of war is the overwhelming militarization of society. War generates doctrines. Apart from the bitterness and misery of the victims, conflicts also leave very long legacies in polarization. . . . These must then be changed.

I do have my substitute. First, I think it is absolutely necessary to prevent conflict. And by that I mean addressing all of the problems that give rise to conflicts. For example, if in one town there are crimes and robberies, we have to look into why these are occurring. Preventing conflict means resolving problems that give rise to conflict. It also means being more human, more simple, more honorable, and more honest. I think false promises are sometimes a cause of conflict.

[Second,] I think we must also search for political solutions to conflicts that already exist. If conflicts already exist in Chiapas [Mexico], Colombia and Guatemala, then we must work hard for dialogue and negotiation as a viable means of addressing them.

Third, humanity must preserve the peace, once it is achieved. This does not mean simply assuring that treaties are implemented. Treaties and conventions must be converted into tangible programs. A permanent effort must be made to solve problems, rather than waiting for them to accumulate to a point where they can spark further conflict.

Mary King: I found in my research that when you were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, some observers questioned the validity of your nomination, and cynics criticized you, claiming that you favored guerrilla warfare. In your book [*I, Rigoberta Menchú*], you wrote about throwing stones with such accuracy that you could disable a soldier. You also mentioned learning how to squirt lime juice into the eyes of the soldiers in such a way that you could blind anyone temporarily. What are your thoughts about mixing nonviolent methods with what some would term violent tactics?

Rigoberta Menchú: The victims don't choose the impact of the violence with which they have to live. When I think about the death of my mother, I would have preferred that she not die. If I could have detained or caught her kidnappers and strung them up on a stick, or if I could have prevented the burning of the Spanish Embassy where my father died, I would have used anything! I would have done things to prevent seeing my father in flames! The impact of violence on my life has been enormous. . . . When people feel endangered, their natural reaction is to defend themselves. That is what happens in conflicts.

In Guatemala, we have, for example, taken over land. This was so that the government would listen to us, listen to our claim; otherwise, we knew that our children would die of hunger. The logical response of a government should be not to throw tear gas – or worse – but to engage in a dialogue about how to solve problems and provide solutions.

When I think about the massacres in more than 440 villages and small towns that were burned to the ground, or when I think of the men and women, elderly, children and pregnant women slaughtered, I know that anyone able to survive the massacres would have used any means possible to have prevented them in the first place. One must distinguish between organized, plotted, intentional political violence – intended to incite more violence – versus the more natural reaction of self-defense.

Mary King: Do you have plans for the future of Guatemala, or a program that you hope to see implemented?

Rigoberta Menchú: When I received the Nobel Peace Prize, I said I would create a foundation. To say it and to do it were two different things. We studied what Mother Teresa had done, what the Dalai Lama is doing, the work of Desmond Tutu, and the programs of Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. I needed good ideas to guide me in what I wanted to do. The Rigoberta Menchú Foundation is now working in two fields. In the first, we educate about peace, including, specifically, civic participation. We have organized several campaigns in Guatemala, such as programs to help people value the vote again, rather than making an automatic turn toward war. We found that in certain regions, 50 or 60 percent of the women had never voted – they had no identity papers and no faith in the results. Another program strengthens Mayan institutions through assistance in setting up cooperatives and legal services. We are setting up a program of technical assistance to municipalities because we want good, clean, local government that can serve as an example for the national government. Many municipal governments have not performed well for lack of experience. . . . We also hope to work in some areas of formal education, such as a program for Meso-America based on our analysis of the educational system for indigenous peoples in Chiapas, Belize, the Caribbean coast of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. . . .

Mary King: Have you been offered help?

Rigoberta Menchú: We are conducting a program with UNESCO, which provides technical and scientific expertise in developing reforms for laws governing education. This has been financed by the government of the Netherlands. We also hope to inaugurate a program in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme to disseminate information about the Guatemalan peace accords and about issues of concern to indigenous peoples in 120 municipalities in Guatemala. . . .

In Guatemala, we have good relationships with both sides of the conflict and will soon have the opportunity to develop programs consistent with the implementation of the new peace accords, that is, peace and development. . . . I hope we will be able to monitor the situation of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, to identify the most successful and viable projects, but also to delineate the most serious problems and deepest pockets of hunger.

Mary King: Will you and the others in your movement in Guatemala seek to have a commission on truth and reconciliation, as has South Africa?

Rigoberta Menchú: We are willing to participate in the redesign of institutions in Guatemala, whether it is of the military system, the judiciary, or whatever. We don't want the future of Guatemala to be designed by the present Guatemalan Government, the American Government, or any other government; rather, we want the people of Guatemala to be participants in its design.

One of the accords on human rights establishes a 'truth commission'. There is an effort to make it a neutral commission, not bearing the flag of any one group or another, and with the theme of reconciliation rather than confrontation. We are also part of a broad coalition, in Guatemala, called the Alliance against Impunity. We are trying to propose laws in which the guerrilla forces could be reincorporated into the country's political life, yet without meaning a blanket amnesty for all.

Mary King: What does a peaceful solution mean to you?

Rigoberta Menchú: It is not enough to have utopian solutions in your head, or dreams about justice and freedom. It is not sufficient to imagine a life of dignity for our people. One has to know how to dream, but one also has to know how to implement dreams. I always say to friends, 'Don't help me to see the stars. I can already see them. Help me to reach them – that's another thing.' Our foundation is committed to educating for peace. By peace, I mean ethics and intercultural relations. I believe in intercultural relations because only then can we build respect for indigenous peoples, mestizo peoples, and others. . . .

I think this is the ideal moment to take stock of indigenous values and local ways of life. . . . Our elders, with their wisdom, have an extremely important role to play. The godmothers, the midwives, and the women of medicine have a crucial role in shaping the values of the society. Yet indigenous people have been projected as dirty and violent. We need to rescue the real values that are integral to our communities.

We have a beautiful history in Guatemala – one that celebrates the identity and the lives of the indigenous people. Perhaps for the first time now, a multi-ethnic nation can be established. Ours must be a multicultural country, a multilingual nation. We have many languages in our country, and these need the idea of a multi-ethnic reality to flourish. Right now, if I were to go to San Carlos University, in Guatemala, as an indigenous woman, the language in which the courses would be taught would not be my language; another language would be used. The challenge is happily to transform concepts into concrete programs and a way of life. I think that means a change in macroeconomic planning and changes in how governments behave. It also means that nongovernmental organizations must play a much bigger role.

Mary King: Do you ever expect to see the day when Guatemalan police will be

trained for nonviolent resolution of fights or prevention of political violence, and when nonviolent methods will be taught for the handling of disputes?

Rigoberta Menchú: In Guatemala, there is great need for a civilian police force capable of settling small conflicts and bringing about a sense of justice and order. We need to create such a force to fill this social role. . . . Now we are able to say: instead of giving a rifle to somebody, build a school; instead of giving a rifle, build a community with adequate services. Instead of giving a rifle, develop an educational system that is not about conflict and violence, but one that promotes respect for values, for life, and respect for one's elders. This requires a huge investment. Yet if we can invest in a different vision of peaceful coexistence, I think we can change the world, because every problem has a nonviolent answer.

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Epilogue

The influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. . . . [Their] influence . . . sustained us after they have passed away.

Mohandas K. Gandhi[1]

1. Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'Interview of Gandhi with Nirmal Kumar Bose', *Hindustan Times*, 17 October 1935.

Dog-eared copies of Krishnalal Shridharani's *War without Violence* had to be passed from hand to hand before reaching Martin Luther King Jr and the others of the mid-twentieth-century American South, who absorbed his riveting descriptions of Gandhi's campaigns. The ripples from this pebble thrown in the pond, as King's tutor Glenn Smiley described the effects of this captivating book, are still reaching distant shores. King's own 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail', initially scrawled around the margins of his jailhouse newspaper, has been photocopied by thousands of individuals and groups the world over. Gene Sharp's writings analyzing nonviolent strategies and revising our understanding of how it is possible to defend one's way of life have often had to be translated, reprinted and circulated clandestinely.

Word of mouth, frequently the most reliable and credible method for sharing knowledge of nonviolent strategies, will always be important. Since the requirements for well-reasoned, planned and disciplined nonviolent direct action may sound odd or cryptic if not explained by an experienced player – someone who has studied their underlying logic – trainers and tutors such as Bayard Rustin, Glenn Smiley and James Lawson will always be needed.

In the future, the covert distribution of *samizdat,* such as those that played an important part in the Czechs' and Slovaks' revolution, could be aided by computers and fax machines. Cassettes and videotapes, so effective in disseminating the speeches of Aung San Suu Kyi, become more cheaply and easily reproducible each year. Computers can speed the peaceful resolution of problems. Not only do electronic interactive conferences make it possible to have simultaneous conversations with persons in several institutions, provinces or countries, electronic transmission also increases exponentially the ability to disseminate materials and writings within a house of worship, a single neighborhood or around the world.

As more and more groups in a multitude of societies are able to know of the successful use of nonviolent tools to achieve political goals, it is possible that universal recognition of the value and practicality of settling conflict without violent subjugation will evolve. Gandhi's shrewd insight that conflict offers an opportunity to reorganize the elements that produced it in the first place has not yet been fully apprehended. This is a proposition that lends itself to ongoing international electronic conversation. Rare is the country in which some institutions and individuals are not able to connect to the Internet. In general, knowledge is becoming more accessible on how to press for legitimate rights or stifled aspirations, although underground transmission of writings will still be necessary and letters will always be smuggled from political prisoners. Gandhi's foresight regarding the significance of communications – a crucial variable in all of the Indian nonviolent campaigns – only hints at its possibilities. News conferences and printing presses can help produce political or moral jiu-jitsu as well as bring people together in plazas, squares or on thoroughfares. Cameras for photo-documentation and calculators for economic measurements are among the tools for sharpening awareness of injustice and inducing change in the opponent. Few are the numbers needed for the communication of theories big in consequences and techniques potent in rewards. The spread of awareness of disciplined, nonviolent strategic action through computer technologies is only made more urgent by the daily reports of political violence throughout the world – whether of boy soldiers in Liberia or of children in some American cities sleeping in bathtubs to protect themselves from drive-by gang shootings.

The wide availability of tools for nonviolent resistance means that societies and groups need not remain passive when faced with persecution. Assured that nonviolent sanctions are within their reach to counter repression, people can learn democratic decision making, distinguish in practice the powers of citizenship and discover how to work with others in order to impede despotism or surmount tyranny. The experiences of those who have been chronicled here, representing diverse cultures, civilizations and religious backgrounds, suggest not only that persons using nonviolent strategies against major political problems have power, but that nonviolent resistance is based on a more profound understanding of power than is military force. Reliance on military approaches may lessen as acquaintance with nonviolent direct action expands. The dogs of war are less likely to be unleashed as more and more societies – and segments within societies – learn of the power of nonviolent action.

Knowledge of such power includes the exploration of traditions essential to one's group. The search for feasible instruments with which to struggle against military regimes, oppressive bureaucracies and dictatorships requires the probing of one's own background, history and heritage. Aung San Suu Kyi takes her views of the proper role for the military from her

father's vision. Lech Walesa was inspired by both Roman Catholic and labor union understandings of resistance. Sulak Sivaraksa derives his interpretations from ancient Buddhist imperatives.

In reading about people in the Eastern European nonviolent movements – Polish shipyard workers, Protestant pastors in the shadow of huge fortifications in East Berlin or playwrights and authors in Prague – all of whom came to maturity in a world dominated by the invincibility of the Soviet Union – one need not despair at being outnumbered or feeling powerless. For the dispossessed, those seeking self-determination, groups pleading for human rights, individuals eager to build democracies or peoples denied their heritage, nonviolent direct action offers an alternative to the automatic resort to violence, with its inevitable dregs of antagonism and bitterness.

Much of the world still equates violence with strength. This assumption is historically derived from the tradition of war as the ultimate arbiter of conflict and is associated with the perception of war or violence as a rite or manifestation of manhood, as being inspired by scriptural texts, or as the idea that the magnitude of force best reflects the depth of conviction. Violence has also been described as a cleansing process. Greater indomitability and persistence are found in the accounts of nonviolent movements. We have seen nonviolent struggles effective despite the systematic and well-organized aggression of imperial administration, institutionalized racism, superpower systems of control, political police, military occupation and massacring armies. Militant nonviolence expresses in action the realization that the means of struggle has an impact on the nature of the outcome. Once Palestinians adopted new ideas about the value of negotiations with the Israelis, it led to a re-evaluation of armed struggle and the advantages of nonviolent strategies. The Palestinian *intifada* suggests that no matter how inveterate a conflict, nonviolent sanctions can produce results that armed struggle will not.

Those who are still resisting can remember that Gandhi's radical insistence on Truth allowed the people of India to confront power itself in a way that fundamentally redefined its meaning. Those who despair in the face of structural violence can think back to King's transformation of a minority's exclusion into the improvement of democracy for an entire country and a struggle against poverty. Those who fear their cause is lost due to repressive regimes may recall the Czechs' and Slovaks' illegal printing presses, posters, memorized manifestoes, underground publishing houses and journals that appeared from nowhere. Individuals daunted by the arrogance of undemocratic or overweening power can recollect that nonviolent strategies are often devised in a single place – a church in Montgomery, the Magic Lantern Theatre of Prague, a bookstore in Bangkok, the Nikolai Church of Leipzig or a family compound in Rangoon. Those bowed down by merciless regimes can think back to how the penetration of ideas in these

pages took place song by song, chapter by chapter, book by book or leaflet by leaflet.

Nonviolent struggle, endlessly changing because of its ability to innovate and improvise, has, as Gandhi said, a permanent portion. Its resourcefulness is the stuff of which it is made. Through its demand that each group, people, time or place create its own constructive methods and strategies, nonviolent resistance gains its endurance and strength. Rigoberta Menchú's lightning meetings and propaganda bombs had to be fast in order for the Mayan Indians to avoid massacres by the Guatemalan army. At the heart of nonviolent struggle is also a changeless idea: loyalty to the human race should supersede other loyalties – whether racial, religious or nationalistic. Gandhi's insistence that the British could leave India as friends was neither idealism nor naïvety; it showed a higher allegiance to shared humanity and a future untorn by recrimination. The matter of its basic diplomacy and good politics was secondary.

For the practitioners of nonviolent resistance, stamina and resilience come with knowing that cooperation can always be withheld. The Poles were able to devise methods for labor actions that did not cripple their already unsteady economy while showing that the people drove the engines of society, and not the other way around. *Hijra* has been in reserve as a technique for withdrawing obedience since the Prophet Muhammad employed it in the seventh century, but this utmost measure is not the only safeguard against submission. As we have seen, overcoming fear is one of the most potent properties of nonviolent struggle. When the people of Thailand, and their admired king, bore witness to a desire for justice and democracy that was more fervent than their fear of armies, the military generals – who had for decades been overthrowing civilian governments, dissolving parliaments and installing unelected prime ministers through coups d'état – were obliged to step back. Flickering candles, with their vulnerability to a breath of air or gust of wind, conveyed lack of fear to an authoritarian East German apparatus more mightily than could any weapon, confounding the security forces and bringing about the implosion of the regime.

Nonviolent direct action can be understood as Gandhi's Truth, King's *agape* Love, the East German pastors' exertion of individual conscience or Havel's living in truth. It is also frequently the only thing that will work, adopted when everything else has failed or because anything else will make things worse. There is nothing ignoble about choosing nonviolent methods for utilitarian reasons. Intrinsic to revolutionary nonviolence are popular participation, high regard for human rights, the pursuit of justice and a reverence for life. As we have seen, its power can be effective against empire, racism and social oppression, centralized structures, repressive regimes, dictatorships, indifferent bureaucracies, armies, military occupation and those who usurp power through coups d'état.

Nonviolent resistance holds in complete balance political responsibility

and fidelity to ethics, leaving no tension between the practical and the moral. To be able to fight productively for change and yet reject the use of violence brings to fruition fundamental principles from the world's great religions – so often a factor in these accounts. When nonviolent struggle is employed in seemingly intractable conflicts, it can mean a realization of the highest and most enduring moral aspirations, combined with the ultimate in pragmatism. Great will be the results, if such nonviolent direct actions become the strategies of the future. They will be, to use Martin Luther King's pungent phrase, the 'fire that no water can put out'.

Appendix 1

Gandhi's fasts

In fasting, Gandhi found a point of convergence between Hinduism and nonviolence that helped to legitimize *satyagraha* with Indians.[1] Hindus believe that through sacrifice 'the devout could attain their desired ends when faced with a crisis', and, therefore, self-denial potentially becomes a way to achieve goals.[2] This also makes it an instrument of *satyagraha*.

Fasting was first and foremost, for Gandhi, a process of self-purification as part of *satyagraha*. 'Self-purification is advanced by its adherents as an instrument for convincing the opponent that the Satyagrahis intend to struggle to the finish, and that they are ready to make any sacrifice in order to achieve their ends.'[3] This willingness to sacrifice shows the onlooker the sincerity of the *satyagrahis*. It also works within a movement to build morale.

Gandhi fasted for diverse reasons, often based on a mixture of Hinduism and *satyagraha*. His fasts for Hindu–Muslim unity are considered to be the most exemplary among his uses of fasting as a principle tool of *satyagraha*. While it seems that Gandhi fasted frequently, he believed that such sacrifice was 'only to be used under very special circumstances and that it would have to be used by one who mastered the technique to perfection'.[4] There is 'no room for selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience in a pure fast'; rather, fasting as exercised by Gandhi calls for 'infinite patience, firm resolve, singlemindedness of purpose, perfect calm, and no anger'.[5]

Following is a listing of fasts undertaken by Gandhi, provided by the historian B. R. Nanda.

1913 Phoenix settlement, near Durban, South Africa

Penitential fast for a week due to the moral lapse of two residents at the settlement. Gandhi took only one meal a day for the next four and a half months.

1914 Phoenix settlement, South Africa

Fourteen-day fast, for reasons similar to those for which he fasted in 1913.

1915 Sabarmati ashram, near Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

[1 June] Detection of untruth among the boys at the Sabarmati ashram.

[11 September] Some of the ashramites observed a fast because a *harijan* was admitted to the ashram.

1918 Ahmedabad

[12 March] Seeing the weakness of striking Ahmedabad textile mill workers, Gandhiji declared: 'Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or until they leave the mill altogether, I will not touch any food.' A settlement was reached after a three-day fast.

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1. Krishnalal Shridharani, *War without Violence* (Chowpatty/Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), p. 192.
2. Ibid., p. 191.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vidyapith, Peace Research Centre, 1992), p. 118.
5. *Harijan*, 13 October 1940, in Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal*, op. cit., p. 117.

[15–17 March] For a rise in the wages of the mill-hands of Ahmedabad, and also because of damaging reports made about him by some of the mill-hands.

1919

[6 April] First day of Gandhi's first national *satyagraha* campaign, directed against the Rowlatt Bills. Gandhi fasted on this date every year thereafter.

Sabarmati

[13 April] Penitential fast for three days, when attempts were made to tear up the tracks near the railway station at Nadia and a government officer had been murdered at Viramgam.

The Jalianwallah Bagh massacre at Amritsar. Gandhi fasted on this date every year thereafter.

[13–15 April] Disturbances at Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places.

1921 Bombay

[9–13 November] Five-day fast following rioting and bloodshed on the occasion of the Prince of Wales' visit.

[19–21 November] Disturbances at Bombay.

[28 November] Disturbances at Bombay. From this time on, Gandhi fasted every Monday.

1922

[12–16 February] Chauri Chaura incident (see Chapter One).

1924

[17 September to 7 October] Fast for Hindu–Muslim unity.

1925 Sabarmati

[24 November] Seven-day fast for lapses among ashram residents.

1928

[22–24 June] Moral lapse of someone living at the ashram.

1932

[20–25 September] In protest against the decision of the prime minister of Britain to set up separate electorates for the *harijans*. The decision was subsequently canceled.

[3 December] In protest against the government not allowing a fellow prisoner to do scavenging work. The fast was broken on 4 December.

1933 Yeravada prison

[8–28 May] For self-purification of himself and his colleagues.

[16–22 August] In protest against the government decision not to grant all the facilities for *harijan* work that Gandhi had previously enjoyed.

1934 Wardha

[7–13 August] To atone for an injury caused to Pundit Lalnath in a disagreement between Gandhi and the public.

1939 Rajkot

[3–6 March] Against breach of promise by a Rajkot ruler.

1940

[12–13 November] Suspicion of theft by an ashram resident.

1941

[5–7 May] Approximately a seventy-two-hour fast, probably because of communal riots in Bombay and Ahmedabad due to Hindu–Muslim strains.

[19 June] For communal unity – that is, to overcome Hindu–Muslim tensions.

1943

[10 February to 2 March] In protest against government propaganda asserting that the responsibility for disturbances, after the arrest of leaders, was that of the Indian National Congress.

1947

[15 August] Against partition of India into two states.

[1–3 September] Communal disturbances between Hindus and Muslims.

[11 October] (Gandhi's birth date according to the Vikram calendar): Gandhi fasted instead of celebrating his birthday.

1948

[13–17 January] Hindu–Muslim communal disturbances in Delhi.

Appendix 2

Last Sunday sermon by Martin Luther King Jr

King delivered what was to be his last Sunday morning sermon on Passion Sunday at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on 31 March 1968. In it, he explains the relevance of and applies the techniques of nonviolence to the poor people's campaign, antiwar movement and the ongoing civil rights movement. It is a remarkable summation of his beliefs, weaving together many of the themes from a lifetime of study and action, and revealing his expanding vision. It is entitled 'Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution'.[1]

1. This sermon has been rendered from a sound cassette at the Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta.

I would like to use as a subject from which to preach this morning: 'Remaining awake through a great revolution'. The text for the morning is found in the book of Revelation. There are two passages there that I would like to quote, in the sixteenth chapter of that book – 'Behold, I make all things new, former things are passed away.'

I am sure that most of you have read that arresting little story from the pen of Washington Irving entitled 'Rip Van Winkle'. The one thing that we usually remember about the story is that Rip Van Winkle slept twenty years. But there is another point in that little story that is almost completely overlooked. It was the sign in the inn, from which Rip went up in the mountain for his long sleep.

When Rip Van Winkle went up into the mountain, the sign had a picture of King George III of England. When he came down twenty years later the sign had a picture of George Washington, the first president of the United States. When Rip Van Winkle looked up at the picture of George Washington, and looking at the picture he was amazed . . . he was completely lost – he knew not who he was. And this reveals to us that the most striking thing about the story of Rip Van Winkle is not merely that Rip slept twenty years, but that he slept through a revolution. While he was peacefully snoring up in the mountain a revolution was taking place that at points would change the course of history – and Rip knew nothing about it: he was asleep. Yes, he slept through a revolution. And one of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social changes, and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution.

There can be no gainsaying of the fact that a great revolution is taking place in the world today. In a sense it is a triple revolution; that is, a technological revolution, with the impact of automation and cybernation; then there is a revolution in weaponry, with the emergence of atomic and nuclear weapons of warfare. Then there is a human rights revolution, with the freedom explosion that is taking place all over the world. Yes, we do live in a period where changes are taking place and there is still the voice crying through the vista of time saying, 'Behold, I make all things new, former things are passed away.'

Now whenever anything new comes into history it brings with it new challenges . . . and new opportunities.

And I would like to deal with the challenges that we face today as a result of this triple revolution that is taking place in the world today.

First, we are challenged to develop a world perspective. No individual can live alone, no nation can live alone, and anyone who feels that he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The challenge that we face today is to make it one in terms of brotherhood.

Now it is true that the geographical oneness of this age has come into being to a large extent through modern man's scientific ingenuity. Modern man through his scientific genius has been able to dwarf distance and place time in chains. And our jet planes have compressed into minutes distances that once took weeks and even months. All of this tells us that our world is a neighborhood.

Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet . . . we have not had the ethical commitment to make of

it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as brothers. Or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured.

John Donne caught it years ago and placed it in graphic terms – 'No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent – a part of the main.' And he goes on toward the end to say, 'Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind. Therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.' We must see this, believe this, and live by it . . . if we are to remain awake through a great revolution.

Secondly, we are challenged to eradicate the last vestiges of racial injustice from our nation. I must say this morning that racial injustice is still the black man's burden and the white man's shame.

It is an unhappy truth that racism is a way of life for the vast majority of white Americans, spoken and unspoken, acknowledged and denied, subtle and sometimes not so subtle – the disease of racism permeates and poisons a whole body politic. And I can see nothing more urgent than for America to work passionately and unrelentingly to get rid of the disease of racism.

Something positive must be done, everyone must share in the guilt as individuals and as institutions. The government must certainly share the guilt, individuals must share the guilt, even the church must share the guilt.

We must face the sad fact that at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing 'In Christ there is no East or West', we stand in the most segregated hour of America.

The hour has come for everybody, for all institutions of the public sector and the private sector to work to get rid of racism. And now if we are to do it we must honestly admit certain things and get rid of certain myths that have constantly been disseminated all over our nation.

One is the myth of time. It is the notion that only time can solve the problem of racial injustice. And there are those who often sincerely say to the Negro and his allies in the white community, 'Why don't you slow up? Stop pushing things so fast. Only time can solve the problem. And if you will just be nice and patient and continue to pray, in a hundred or two hundred years the problem will work itself out.'

There is an answer to that myth. It is that time is neutral. It can be used either constructively or destructively. And I am sorry to say this morning that I am absolutely convinced that the forces of ill will in our nation, the extreme rightists of our nation – the people on the wrong side – have used time more effectively than the forces of good will. And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for that appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, 'Wait on time.'

Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God. And without

this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of social stagnation. So we must help time and realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

Now there is another myth that still gets around; it is a kind of overreaction on the bootstrap philosophy. There are those who still feel that if the Negro is to rise out of poverty, if the Negro is to rise out of the slum conditions, if he is to rise out of discrimination and segregation, he must do it all by himself. And so they say the Negro must lift himself by his own bootstraps.

They never stop to realize that no other ethnic group has been a slave on American soil. The people who say this never stop to realize that the nation made the black man's color a stigma; but beyond this they never stop to realize the debt that they owe a people who were kept in slavery 244 years.

In 1863 the Negro was told that he was free as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation being signed by Abraham Lincoln. But he was not given any land to make that freedom meaningful. It was something like keeping a person in prison for a number of years and suddenly discovering that that person is not guilty of the crime for which he was convicted. And you just go up to him and say: 'Now you are free', but you don't give him any bus fare to get to town. You don't give him any money to get some clothes to put on his back or to get on his feet again in life.

Every court of jurisprudence would rise up against this, and yet this is the very thing that our nation did to the black man. It simply said, 'You're free', and it left him there penniless, illiterate, not knowing what to do. And the irony of it all is that at the same time the nation failed to do anything for the black man, though an act of Congress was giving away millions of acres of land in the West and the Midwest, which meant that it was willing to undergird its white peasants from Europe with an economic floor.

But not only did it give the land, it built land-grant colleges to teach them how to farm. Not only that, it provided county agents to further their expertise in farming; not only that, as the years unfolded it provided low interest rates so that they could mechanize their farms. And to this day thousands of these very persons are receiving millions of dollars in federal subsidies every year not to farm. And these are so often the very people who tell Negroes that they must lift themselves by their own bootstraps. It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.

We must come to see that the roots of racism are very deep in our country, and there must be something positive and massive in order to get rid of all the effects of racism and the tragedies of racial injustice.

There is another thing closely related to racism that I would like to mention as another challenge. We are challenged to rid our nation and the world of poverty. Like a monstrous octopus, poverty spreads its nagging, prehensile tentacles into hamlets and villages all over our world. They are ill-housed, they are ill-nourished, they are shabbily clad. I have seen it in Latin America; I have seen it in Africa; I have seen this poverty in Asia.

I remember some years ago Mrs King and I journeyed to that great country known as India. And I never will forget the experience; it was a marvelous experience to meet and talk with the great leaders of India; to meet and talk with and to speak to thousands and thousands of people all over that vast country. These experiences will remain dear to me as long as the cords of memory shall let them.

But I say to you this morning, my friends, there were those depressing moments – how can one avoid being depressed? – when he sees with his own eyes evidences of millions of people going to bed hungry at night? How can one avoid being depressed when he sees with his own eyes God's children sleeping on the sidewalks at night?

In Bombay more than a million people sleep on the sidewalks every night. In Calcutta more than 600,000 sleep on the sidewalks every night. They have no beds to sleep in; they have no houses to go in. How can one avoid being depressed when he discovers that out of India's population of more than 500 million people, some 480 million make an annual income of less than $90. And most of them have never seen a doctor or a dentist.

As I noticed these things, something within me cried out, 'Can we in America stand idly by and not be concerned?' And an answer came – Oh no! Because the destiny of the United States is tied up with the destiny of India and every other nation. And I started thinking of the fact that we spend in America millions of dollars a day to store surplus food, and I said to myself, 'I know where we can store that food free of charge – in the wrinkled stomachs of millions of God's children all over the world who go to bed hungry at night.' Maybe we spend far too much of our national budget establishing military bases around the world rather than bases of genuine concern and understanding.

Not only do we see poverty abroad, I would remind you that in our own nation there are about 40 million people who are poverty-stricken. I have seen them here and there. I have seen them in the ghettos of the North; I have seen them in the rural areas of the South; I have seen them in Appalachia. I have just been in the process of touring many areas of our country and I must confess that in some situations I have literally found myself crying.

I was in Marks, Mississippi, the other day, which is in Whitman County, the poorest county in the United States. I tell you I saw hundreds of little black boys and black girls walking the streets with no shoes to wear. I saw their mothers and fathers trying to carry on a little head-start program, but they had no money. The federal government hadn't funded them but they were trying to carry on. They raised a little money here and there; trying to get a little food to feed the children; trying to teach them a little something.

And I saw mothers and fathers who said to me not only were they unemployed, they didn't get any kind of income – no old-age pension, no welfare check, nor anything. I said, 'How do you live?' And they say, 'Well, we go around – go around to the neighbors and ask them for a little something. When the berry season comes, we pick berries; when the rabbit season comes, we hunt and catch a few rabbits, and that's about it.'

And I was in Newark and Harlem just this week. And I walked into the homes of welfare mothers; I saw them in conditions – no, not with wall-to-wall carpet, but wall-to-wall rats and roaches. I stood in an apartment and this welfare mother said to me, 'The landlord will not repair this place. I've been here two years and he hasn't made a single repair.' She pointed out the walls with all the ceiling falling through. She showed me the holes where the rats came in. She said night after night we have to stay awake to keep the rats and roaches from getting to the children. I said, 'How much do you pay for this apartment?' She said, '$125.' I

looked and I thought and said to myself, 'It isn't worth $60.' Poor people are forced to pay more for less. Living in conditions day in and day out where the whole area is constantly drained without being replenished. It becomes a kind of domestic colony. And the tragedy is so often these 40 million people are invisible because America is so affluent, so rich; because our expressways carry us from the ghetto, we don't see the poor.

Jesus told a parable one day, and he reminded us that a man went to hell because he didn't see the poor. His name was Dives. He was a rich man. And there was a man by the name of Lazarus who was a poor man, but not only was he poor, he was sick. Sores were all over his body, and he was so weak that he could hardly move. But he managed to get to the gate of Dives every day, wanting to just have the crumbs that would fall from his table. And Dives did nothing about it. And the parable ends saying, 'Dives went to hell, and there was a fixed gulf now between Lazarus and Dives.'

There is nothing in that parable that said Dives went to hell because he was rich. Jesus never made a universal indictment against all wealth. It is true that one day a rich young ruler came to him, and he advised him to sell all, but in that instance Jesus was prescribing individual surgery and not setting forth a universal diagnosis. And if you will look at that parable with all of its symbolism, you will remember that a conversation took place between heaven and hell and on the other end of that long-distance call between heaven and hell was Abraham in heaven talking to Dives in hell.

Now Abraham was a very rich man. If you go back to the Old Testament, you see that he was the richest man of his day, so it was not a rich man in hell talking with a poor man in heaven, it was a little millionaire in hell talking with a multimillionaire in heaven. Dives didn't go to hell because he was rich; Dives didn't realize that his wealth was his opportunity. It was his opportunity to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother, Lazarus. Dives went to hell because he passed by Lazarus every day and he never really saw him. He went to hell because he allowed his brother to become invisible. Dives went to hell because he maximized the minimum and minimized the maximum. Indeed, Dives went to hell because he sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty.

And this can happen to America, the richest nation in the world – and nothing's wrong with that – this is America's opportunity to help bridge the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. The question is whether America will do it. There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will.

In a few weeks some of us are coming to Washington to see if the will is still alive or if it is alive in this nation. We are coming to Washington in a poor people's campaign. Yes, we are going to bring the tired, the poor, the huddled masses. We are going to bring those who have known long years of hurt and neglect. We are going to bring those who have come to feel that life is a long and desolate corridor with no exit signs. We are going to bring children and adults and old people; people who have never seen a doctor or a dentist in their lives.

We are not coming to engage in any histrionic gesture. We are not coming to tear up Washington. We are coming to demand that the government address itself to the problem of poverty. We read one day – 'We hold these truths to be

self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed [by their Creator] with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' But if a man doesn't have a job or an income, he has neither life nor liberty nor the possibility for the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists.

We are coming to ask America to be true to the huge promissory note that it signed years ago. And we are coming to engage in dramatic nonviolent action, to call attention to the gulf between promise and fulfillment; to make the invisible visible.

Why do we do it this way? We do it this way because it is our experience that the nation doesn't move around questions of genuine equality for the poor and for black people until it is confronted massively, dramatically in terms of direct action.

Great documents are here to tell us something should be done. We met here some years ago in the White House conference on civil rights, and we came out with the same recommendations that we will be demanding in our campaign here, but nothing has been done. The president's commission on technology, automation and economic progress recommended these things some time ago. Nothing has been done. Even the urban coalition of mayors of most of the cities of our country and the leading businessmen have said these things should be done. Nothing has been done. . . .

And I submit that nothing will be done until people of good will put their bodies and their souls in motion. And it will be the kind of soul force brought into being as a result of this confrontation that I believe will make the difference. Yes, it will be a poor people's campaign. This is the question facing America. Ultimately, a great nation is a compassionate nation. America has not met its obligations and its responsibilities to the poor.

One day we will have to stand before the God of history and we will talk in terms of things we've done. Yes, we will be able to say we built gargantuan bridges to span the seas, we built gigantic buildings to kiss the skies. Yes, we made our submarines to penetrate oceanic depths. We brought into being many other things with our scientific and technological power.

It seems that I can hear the God of history saying, 'That was not enough! But I was hungry and ye fed me not. I was naked and ye clothed me not. I was devoid of a decent sanitary house to live in, and ye provided no shelter for me. And consequently, you cannot enter the kingdom of greatness. If ye do it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me.' That's the question facing America today.

I want to say one other challenge that we face is simply that we must find an alternative to war and bloodshed. Anyone who feels, and there are still a lot of people who feel that way, that war can solve the social problems facing mankind is sleeping through a great revolution. President Kennedy said on one occasion, 'Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind.' The world must hear this. I pray God that America will hear this before it is too late because today we're fighting a war.

I am convinced that it is one of the most unjust wars that has ever been fought in the history of the world. Our involvement in the war in Viet Nam has torn up the Geneva accord. It has strengthened the military-industrial complex; it has strengthened the forces of reaction in our nation; it has put us against the self-

determination of a vast majority of the Vietnamese people, and put us in the position of protecting a corrupt regime that is stacked against the poor.

It has played havoc with our domestic destinies. This day we are spending $500,000 to kill every Vietcong soldier – every time we kill one we spend about $500,000 while we spend only $53 a year for every person characterized as poverty-stricken in the so-called poverty program; which is not even a good skirmish against poverty.

Not only that, it has put us in a position of appearing to the world as an arrogant nation. And here we are 10,000 miles away from home fighting for the so-called freedom of the Vietnamese people when we have not even put our own house in order. And we force young black men and young white men to fight and kill in brutal solidarity. Yet when they come back home they can't hardly live on the same block together.

The judgment of God is upon us today, and we could go right down the line and see that something must be done . . . and something must be done quickly. We have alienated ourselves from other nations so we end up morally and politically isolated in the world. There is not a single major ally of the United States of America that would dare send a troop to Viet Nam and so the only friends that we have now are a few client-nations like Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea and a few others.

This is where we are. Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind, and the best way to start is to put an end to war in Viet Nam because if it continues, we will inevitably come to the point of confronting China, which could lead the whole world to nuclear annihilation.

It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence, and the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a greater suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to strengthening the United Nations and thereby disarming the whole world may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation, and our earthly habitat would be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.

This is why I felt the need of raising my voice against that war and working wherever I can to arouse the conscience of our nation on it. I remember so well when I first took a stand against the war in Viet Nam, the critics took me on and they had their say in the most negative and sometimes most vicious way.

One day a newsman came to me and said, 'Dr King, don't you think you're going to have to stop, now, opposing the war and move more in line with the administration's policy? As I understand it, it has hurt the budget of your organization, and people who once respected you have lost respect for you. Don't you feel that you've really got to change your position?'

I looked at him and I had to say, 'Sir, I'm sorry you don't know me. I'm not a consensus leader. I do not determine what is right and wrong by looking at the budget of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. I've not taken a sort of Gallup Poll of the majority opinion. Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus.'

On some positions, cowardice asks the question, is it expedient?

And then expedience comes along and asks the question, is it politic?

Vanity asks the question, is it popular?

Conscience asks the question, is it right?

There comes a time when one must take the position that it is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right. I believe today that there is a need for all people of good will to come with a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'We ain't goin' study war no more.' This is the challenge facing modern man.

Let me close by saying that we have difficult days ahead in the struggle for justice and peace, but I will not yield to a politic of despair. I'm going to maintain hope as we come to Washington in this campaign, the cards are stacked against us. This time we will really confront a Goliath. God grant that we will be that David of truth set against the Goliath of injustice, the Goliath of neglect, the Goliath of refusing to deal with the problems, and go on with the determination to make America the truly great America that it is called to be.

I say to you that our goal is freedom, and I believe we are going to get there because however much she strays away from it, the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be as a people, our destiny is tied up in the destiny of America.

Before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. Before the beautiful words of 'The Star Spangled Banner' were written, we were here.

For more than two centuries our forebears labored here without wages. They made cotton king, and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most humiliating and oppressive conditions. And yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to grow and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn't stop us, the opposition that we now face surely will fail.

We're going to win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of the Almighty God are embodied in our echoing demands. And so, however dark it is, however deep the angry feelings are, and however violent explosions are, I can still sing 'We Shall Overcome.'

We shall overcome because the arc of a moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right – no lie can live forever. We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right – truth crushed to earth will rise again. We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right – as we were singing earlier today, 'Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown, standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.'

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair the stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

Thank God for John, who centuries ago out on a lonely, obscure island called Patmos caught vision of a new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, who heard a voice saying, 'Behold, I make all things new, former things are passed away.'

God grant that we will be participants in this newness and this magnificent development. If we will but do it, we will bring about a new day of justice and brotherhood and peace. And that day the morning stars will sing together and the sons of God will shout for joy. God bless you.

Glossary

agape: from the Greek, an understanding love, redeeming goodwill for all persons that is spontaneous, without demands, creative and asking of nothing; the love of God within the human heart.

ahimsa: noninjury, nonviolence, harmlessness; renunciation of the will to kill and the intention to harm; abstention from any hostile thought, word or act; noncoercion.

ashram: a spiritual self-help fellowship, retreat, community or hermitage.

Bapu: literally 'father', a term of affection and respect.

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids: a union organized on 25 August 1925 by a small group of porters and maids in New York. Its members, because of their dissatisfaction with their wages and conditions, approached A. Philip Randolph and invited him to lead them. In 1935, the group was given an international charter by the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The Pullman railroad sleeping-car company, which had since 1867 employed blacks as porters and maids, refused to recognize the group until 25 August 1937.

civil disobedience: deliberate, peaceful and open violation of statutes, laws, orders, decrees, or military or police directives, accompanied by willingness to accept all of the penalties. One of the most severe forms in a large category of acts of political noncooperation, such action originates from a conviction that there are circumstances when the moral responsibility to disobey illegitimate laws must be adhered to out of obedience to higher laws.

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality, established specifically on Gandhian precepts by George Houser and black and white pacifists affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), who began the group. It was patterned on a suggestion offered in a paper by James Farmer entitled the 'Provisional Plan for Brotherhood Mobilization', and submitted to A. J. Muste of FOR on 19 February 1942. CORE, with Farmer at its helm for many years, pioneered the techniques of nonviolent sit-ins and freedom rides during the 1940s,

and later adapted and participated in their use in 1960 and 1961. Farmer and Bayard Rustin spread the ideas of CORE in their capacity as traveling FOR secretaries.

FOR: Fellowship of Reconciliation, the US branch of an international and interfaith peace organization that started in Europe with the onset of the First World War. The parent organization, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), is headquartered in Alkmaar (Netherlands); the US office, in Nyack, New York, was established in 1915. IFOR was in contact with Gandhi and supported the Indian independence struggle. FOR connections to Martin Luther King Jr were varied and extensive, chiefly through Bayard Rustin and Glenn E. Smiley, both of whom worked intensively with King in the Montgomery bus boycott.

freedom rides: group acts of civil disobedience that, in 1961, deliberately violated prohibitions against open seating during interstate travel. The rides sought to challenge the failure of the US Government to carry out a 1946 Supreme Court decision and a similar 1960 ruling that racially segregated seating on interstate lines and in terminals was unconstitutional. Black and white riders traveled in racially integrated fashion across state lines. The concept was originated by CORE in 1947.

harijan: literally 'child of God', the name Gandhi bestowed on the untouchables or outcastes.

hartal: a specific and limited nonviolent measure of highly symbolic nature; suspension of work, closing of shops or day of mourning; an expression of determination, sorrow, revulsion or foreboding.

hijra: migration or self-imposed exile, a form of nonviolent resistance dating to the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

himsa: injury; violence.

Jim Crow: a pejorative term for the laws, codes and protocols requiring racial segregation and discrimination. From the refrain of a nineteenth-century African-American song, 'Wheel about and turn about and jump Jim Crow'.

lathi: a five-foot-long wooden baton or club, often tipped with metal.

mahatma: great soul.

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, formed in 1910 by a group of black and white Northern social workers, educators, journalists, 'neo-abolitionists' and the philosopher W. E. B. DuBois as a rejection of the accommodation of segregation accepted by Booker T. Washington. Its first national campaign was against lynching, and its strategies emphasized publicity and legal approaches. The premier civil rights litigation organization before Martin Luther King Jr rose to national prominence, it was then headed by Roy Wilkins.

Qur'an: Koran, the holy scriptures of Islam.

reconciliation: the act of bringing to agreement, concord or harmony; act of harmonizing or settling a disagreement. For Martin Luther King Jr, the word had the added meaning of the acceptance of God's forgiveness through Christ.

redemption: the act of freeing, delivering or restoring; deliverance from sin; salvation.

rishi: seer.

sarvodaya: universal welfare; social good, public interest.

satyagraha: nonviolent resistance; insistence on Truth; a relentless search for Truth; Truth-force; holding on to Truth; the power of Truth.

satyagrahi: one who offers *satyagraha.*

SCLC: Southern Christian Leadership Conference, formed as a result of a meeting of sixty leaders, most of them clergy, which took place at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, 10–11 January 1957, three weeks after the successful end of the Montgomery bus boycott. Martin Luther King Jr served as its president until his death. The first of two main Southern civil rights organizations, SCLC worked through affiliates in cities throughout the South, most of them headed by African-American clergy, a large proportion of whom were Baptist. (For the other leading Southern civil rights organization, see SNCC.)

shastras: Hindu scriptures.

sit-in: an act of civil disobedience in the Thoreauvian tradition, that is, as Henry David Thoreau advocated civil resistance. Thoreau spent one night in the Concord, Massachusetts, jail in 1846 or 1845 for refusing to pay the poll tax. With Mahatma Gandhi, such deliberate defiance of unjust laws became a mass instrument for political change. In the United States, the sit-in was first used against racial segregation by CORE in the 1940s. The 1960 sit-ins began on 1 February 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, as four young black students remained seated at a lunch counter when refused service and did not leave when asked, submitting to arrest. The sit-ins gave the civil rights movement its mass base and made it a regional phenomenon.

SNCC: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, formed as a result of a regional meeting of student sit-in leaders who gathered as the Southwide Student Leadership Conference, at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, 15–17 April 1960. As sit-ins spread, leaders of the action formed themselves into SNCC with the help of Ella J. Baker, then working with SCLC, and the Reverend James M. Lawson Jr. The second of the two major Southern civil rights organizations, SNCC emphasized grass-roots political organizing, despite its origins in direct action.

swadeshi: belonging to or made in one's own country.

swaraj: independence, home rule, self-governance.