

The African-American Freedom Movement Through the Lens of Gandhian Nonviolence

Chris Moore-Backman

May 2011

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts
Self-Designed Masters Degree Program
Lesley University
Specialization: Nonviolence and Social Change**

Abstract

This thesis explores the meaning and application of the three definitive aspects of the Gandhian approach to nonviolence—personal transformation, constructive program (work of social uplift and renewal), and political action, then details the African-American Freedom Movement's unique expression of and experimentation within those three spheres. Drawing on an in-depth review of historical, theoretical, and biographical literature, and an interview series with six living contemporaries of Martin Luther King Jr., the study highlights key similarities between the nonviolence philosophies and leadership of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., as well as similarities between the movements of which these leaders were a part. Significant differences are also noted, such as the African-American Freedom Movement's relative lack of focused and systematized implementation of a constructive program along Gandhian lines. The study illustrates the degree to which the African-American Freedom Movement manifested Gandhian principles and practices, while also suggesting that contemporary nonviolence practitioners can identify ways in which the Gandhian approach can be more fully adopted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
The Gandhian Approach	
Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian Independence Movement.....	4
Gandhi's Threefold Approach.....	7
The African-American Freedom Movement	
Martin Luther King Jr. and the Context of the Struggle.....	9
The African-American Freedom Movement Through	
the Gandhian Lens.....	11
Gandhi-King Comparative Analyses.....	15
Transformative Leadership.....	16
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY.....	18
Limitations of the Methodology.....	18
Navigating the Literature.....	20
The Interview Series.....	21
Chapter 4: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	24
The Three-Fold Approach of Gandhian Nonviolence.....	24
Personal Transformation.....	25
Constructive Program.....	36
Political Action.....	43

Closing Thoughts on Gandhi's Threefold Approach:	
Gandhi as Transformative Leader.....	55
The African-American Freedom Movement Through the Gandhian Lens... 58	
Personal Transformation.....	63
Constructive Program.....	81
Political Action.....	88
Closing Thoughts on the Freedom Struggle Through	
the Gandhian Lens.....	102
Chapter 5: CONCLUSION.....	104
References.....	107
Appendices.....	117

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I was first introduced to the theory and practice of nonviolence, the foundational subject of this study, during a semester-long undergraduate course at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1992. The readings and lectures of this course, taught by Michael Nagler, centered on the nonviolence philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi, while also touching on Martin Luther King Jr., the Quakers, and other exemplars of nonviolent practice. The course struck a deep chord in me, and I enthusiastically continued to study Gandhian nonviolence on my own after its conclusion. There was no method to my approach beyond an intuitive and happenstance choosing of what to read next, combined with my own Gandhi-inspired experiments with such things as diet, meditation, engaged peace and justice work, and the shedding of material possessions. This two-pronged process, the informal study of and experimentation with nonviolence, has been a central feature of my life since 1992.

During the winter of 2008, a friend who knows of my abiding interest in Gandhi handed me a slim book, and with a knowing look said, “You gotta read this one.” It was Vincent Harding’s (2008) *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*, which proved to be an extremely significant recommendation. Harding’s book convinced me that it was time for me to look deeply into the story of nonviolence in my own country during the pivotal period known as the civil rights era.

While sharing with another friend that the focus of my ongoing studies in nonviolence was about to shift from Gandhi and India to King and the United States, she remarked that I could choose to frame my study in such a way that I could earn a masters degree in the process. This appealed to me, in large part because it would enable me to structure my studies in a coherent and academically rigorous manner. When I discovered Lesley University’s Self-

Designed Masters Degree Program I wrote to Vincent Harding to ask if he would join my team of advisors upon my admission. He agreed and the stage was set.

With Dr. Harding's accompaniment and the oversight of my core faculty advisor, Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra, I identified the texts that I would explore in order to bring my understanding of Martin Luther King Jr. and the U.S. context of his time on par with my knowledge of Gandhi. As I set out to explore the contributions of Martin Luther King and the trajectory of the social movement of which he was a part, my core advisor encouraged me to augment my characteristically Gandhian viewpoint with an additional theoretical lens. We discerned that contemporary discourse on transformative leadership would offer valuable additional perspective and purposefully sought a third member for my advisory team with expertise in leadership studies. Dr. Urusa Fahim enthusiastically joined the team and readily offered the needed guidance, including numerous suggestions of books and articles that enabled me to fold current findings on transformative leadership into my considerations.

Unsurprisingly, additional directions to explore emerged as I worked through my ever-expanding reading list, and as I conducted my interview series. Such labors, of course, ever remain in process.

~

Charting the ways that the African-American Freedom Movement demonstrated the essential elements of Gandhian nonviolence requires research into two of the most influential and well-studied social movements of the 20th century. These movements and their respective leaders have been the focus of countless books and articles. I have mined this expanse of literature with very particular goals at heart. The first goal has been to develop an adequate understanding of the historical and philosophical contexts within which the Gandhian philosophy

emerged, and within which it bore its great influence during the civil rights era in the United States. This work of setting the contextual frame has necessarily led me to a number of biographical studies of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., but it has by no means limited me to them. The second goal has been to gain a clear, working understanding of the Gandhian approach to nonviolence. Toward this end I have explored the meaning and application of the three definitive aspects of the Gandhian approach identified by Gene Sharp (1979) and Robert Burrowes (1996), which are referred to in this study as personal transformation, constructive program, and political action. My third goal has been to survey the African-American Freedom Movement as a case study in Gandhian nonviolence. My specific hope has been to identify various ways in which the three primary aspects of the Gandhian approach were manifested by the movement, in order to gain a better understanding of the Gandhian approach vis-à-vis the U.S. context of that time.

I hope that in so doing this study will contribute to continuing and much needed explorations of the role and relevance of nonviolence in the present day, both in and beyond the United States context. I hope it will function as helpful groundwork for further study, conversation, and on-the-ground nonviolent organizing, all geared toward discovering new ways to make Gandhian nonviolence not only understandable, but fully operational in 21st century America.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

I have organized this review into four often-overlapping thematic sections. The first considers the Gandhian approach to nonviolence, beginning with the biographical-historical context and moving into an exploration of the three spheres of Gandhian practice: personal transformation, constructive program, and political action. The second section focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement. It also begins with the biographical-historical context, centered especially on the figure of Martin Luther King Jr., and then moves to consider the movement in relation to the three Gandhian spheres of experimentation. The third section comments briefly on various comparative analyses of Gandhi and King, and the fourth section looks at examples of relevant contemporary discourse in the field of transformative leadership, as it relates to Gandhian nonviolence.

THE GANDHIAN APPROACH

Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian Independence Movement

In order to gain a clear contextual understanding of Gandhi's India and of the advent of his unique philosophy of nonviolence, I have turned to three of Gandhi's multitude of biographers, Fischer (1950), Brown (1989), and Rajmohan Gandhi (2008), each representing a different publishing era, and each among Gandhi's most respected chroniclers. Louis Fischer, who spent a good deal of time with Gandhi, offers a sweeping, novelistic account of the leader, steeped in praise. He describes Gandhi as a man who "fought passionately and unremittingly against British rule...and against the evil in his own countrymen," while keeping his "hands clean in the midst of battle" (p. 12). "No one," Fischer concludes, "tried so hard—and with so much success—to live a life of truth, kindness, self-effacement, humility, service, and nonviolence throughout a long, difficult struggle against mighty adversaries" (p. 12). In her

narrative, Judith Brown contends that she sought to strike “a balance between the individual and his environment, a conscious correction of the biographer’s tendency to exaggerate his subject’s importance, to make events revolve round him when often he may have been merely peripheral to events or moved by forces over which he had little control” (p. 3). It follows that Brown’s work leaves out the lyrical flourishes characteristic of Fischer’s biography, in favor of a more systematic description of Gandhi’s contributions vis-à-vis his particular context. Rajmohan Gandhi, one of Gandhi’s surviving grandsons, explains that in his narrative he “tries, so far as is possible, to think Gandhi’s thoughts and to tell his story from the perspective of his evolving mind” (p. xiii). Rajmohan Gandhi’s effort to trace the constantly developing leadership of his grandfather, through what can be fathomed of the inner workings of his mind and heart, calls to mind Erikson’s (1969) fascinating historical/psychoanalytic study of the origins of Gandhi’s militant nonviolence, another aid to establishing a wide-angled contextual perspective on the subject.

In tandem with these varying history-based studies, the foundation for understanding the nonviolence philosophy Gandhi crafted is further supported by the work of Mathai (2000), Nagler (2004), and Merton (1964). Mathai, an Indian scholar and activist, offers a holistic description of the Gandhian approach, including cogent analyses of the metaphysical and ethical foundations of Gandhi’s worldview. Nagler also presents a holistic illustration of Gandhi’s nonviolence understanding and commitment, couched within a general exploration of the nature and application of nonviolence in a great variety of settings. His inquiry presents nonviolence as a very real alternative to the options of “violence or capitulation” (p. 61), equally applicable to the everyday life of individuals as it is to third-party interventions on a global scale, such as those spearheaded by organizations such as Peace Brigades International and the Nonviolent

Peaceforce (pp. 26-28, 239). Nagler insists, as Gandhi did, that spiritual and practical training is essential for those seeking to develop their nonviolent reflexes (pp. 75-86). Famed Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, draws out the inextricable link between the spiritual and the political in Gandhi's thought and action, culminating in his potent observation that "the whole Gandhian concept of non-violent action...is incomprehensible if it is thought to be a means of achieving unity rather than as the fruit of inner unity already achieved" (p. 6).

Of course, Gandhi himself provides an invaluable window into his own views on these matters in his famous autobiography. Penned in 1925, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1957) captures Gandhi at the age of 56, reminiscing on his journey up until that point—consistently noting its rootedness in his personal quest for moral consistency and the fundamentally spiritual essence of his approach to life. Gandhi conveys his core spiritual motivation in the autobiography's introduction:

What I want to achieve,—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years,—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha* [i.e., salvation]. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end" (p. xxvi).

All Men Are Brothers (1958), a compilation of hundreds of Gandhi quotations, offers an additional, more comprehensive look at Gandhi's thought over the course of his adult life, covering a great range of topics, such as self-discipline, technology, education, religion, democracy, and international relations. This volume brings to light the powerful consistency of the Gandhian philosophy, as illustrated in its thorough coverage throughout of the foundational concepts of *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance), and the unity of means

and ends. A brief introduction by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan underscores the revolutionary significance of Gandhi, both as a philosopher and as a man of action at the dawn of the nuclear age. He claims that in this volatile context Gandhi not only led the Indian people to liberation by nonviolent means, but that he magnified “the moral resources of mankind” (p. ix).

Gandhi’s Threefold Approach

Sharp’s (1979) and Burrowes’ (1996) distillations of Gandhian nonviolence as the tripartite process of personal transformation, constructive program, and political action offer an extremely useful structure for exploring its holistic nature and its applicability in contexts beyond Gandhi’s India. The literature discussed in the previous section presents a vast assortment of examples of these three spheres of Gandhi’s experimentation, and underscores their obvious interconnection one to another. Additional literature serves to further clarify the particular character of each of these three aspects of the Gandhian design.

Personal Transformation

The reformation of one’s own behavior, the art of bringing one’s outward life into alignment with the inner reality of one’s deepest core values and spirituality, represents the starting place for the practice of Gandhian nonviolence. Building on the previously mentioned literature, particularly the works of Merton (1969), Mathai (2000), and Nagler (2004), it is Gandhi (1999a; 1999b) himself who opens the widest door to understanding the nature and place of personal transformation within his philosophy. The compilation titled *The Way to God* (1999b) hinges on Gandhi’s belief that the realization of God represents “man’s ultimate aim,” and that “all his activities—social, political, religious—have to be guided by [that aim]” (p. 64). The book gives a clear picture of the essentially religious nature of Gandhi’s approach to nonviolent living, and thereby serves to place his work in the social and political realms in their

appropriate context. *Vows and Observances* (1999a) details the ethical principles and practices established by Gandhi for his ashram communities. This helps to clarify the particular spiritual disciplines and personal bearing that Gandhi viewed as pre-requisites for a life of nonviolent service.

Constructive Program

From the realm of personal transformation the Gandhian approach moves into the social sphere, where societal uplift and renewal are sought along nonviolent lines. Toward this end, Gandhi (1945) proposed the “Constructive Programme,” a list of 19 projects that he suggested as the basis for India’s national renewal on a massive scale. The work of constructive program represents a binding force between the individual and the political, engendering personal transformation while training one for civil disobedience in the political realm. Again joining Mathai (2000) and Nagler (2004), Sharp (1979) devotes an insightful chapter in his *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* to the critical role of constructive program within the Gandhian schema. Mary King (1999) offers additional summary and analysis, highlighting the dual nature of the constructive program as a means to national self-sufficiency and personal self-respect. With specific focus on *khadi* (hand-spinning), arguably the central feature of Gandhi’s constructive program, Mary King argues that while the hand-spinning campaign responded concretely to the British textile monopoly, its “genius” was that it “did something about the inertia of the poor and altered their feelings of impotence” (p. 37).

Political Action

While political action represents the sphere of nonviolent experimentation for which Gandhi is most famous, in terms of importance it is the aspect to which he lent the least emphasis. Nonetheless, political action stands as a crucial third pillar of the holistic model of

nonviolence that is the central subject of this study. Two previously mentioned authors deserve acknowledgement here for their careful treatment of Gandhi's approach to political organizing and action. Erikson (1969) and Mary King (1999) investigate Gandhi's formulation and application of *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance) through analyses of particular campaigns he led in the Indian context. Bonduant's (1988) classic study, *Conquest of Violence*, does the same to great effect. Though initially published in 1958, Bonduant's narrative, which includes detailed analysis of five Gandhi-led campaigns, remains one of the most thorough and incisive interpretations of Gandhi's political thought and action. Her penetrating study, Sharp (1979) asserts, presents *satyagraha* as a widely applicable technique of action deserving of concerted "social research on the peaceful resolution of potentially violent conflicts" (p 62). Again, Gandhi (2001) himself offers the authoritative word on his theory and methods vis-à-vis the political realm. The compilation *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)* presents Gandhi's explication of *satyagraha*, "a method of securing rights by personal suffering" (p. 17), through a kaleidoscopic treatment of a sweeping range of topics, including civil disobedience, discipline, war, fasting, and the role of women. What consistently emerges is Gandhi's unwavering insistence that in the political field, as in any facet of human choice and social interaction, the unity of means and ends is absolute.

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Martin Luther King Jr. and the Context of the Struggle

For my close examination of nonviolence in the United States during the civil rights era, I looked to Taylor Branch (1988; 1998; 2006) and David Garrow (2004) to set the stage. Their highly respected works chart the movement years and the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. with great detail—Branch offering candid, sometimes impassioned commentary and analysis,

while Garrow presents a more fact-heavy, day-by-day newsreel account of the unfolding history. Jackson (2007) augments these works with his incisive study of King's organizing and rhetoric during those same pivotal years, with specific attention to his evolving vision of economic justice and human rights. And, in *We Shall Overcome* (1990), Albert and Hoffman draw together the contributions of a wide variety of scholars and activists to further delineate the religious, historical, and sociological contexts from which King and the Freedom Movement emerged.

Miller (1968), a very early biographer of Martin Luther King Jr., adds depth to the historical narrative with his incisive interpretation of King's significance as an American leader, specifically with regards to white America. Writing just following King's assassination and the subsequent urban riots, Miller describes white Americans' unmet responsibilities with regards to their black counterparts, arguing that white Americans "must learn that they have more to fear and more to lose from white racism than from black rioters. If they will emulate Martin Luther King," Miller concludes, "they will take upon themselves, however blameless they may be as individuals, the responsibility for bringing about the changes that are needed" (p. 290).

In terms of Gandhian philosophy, during the Freedom Movement years there was arguably no stronger proponent or better articulator than Martin Luther King Jr. In his books, King (1958, 1964, 1967a, 1968) holds the Gandhian approach to the light of his own experience as a leader of many of the pivotal campaigns of the civil rights years, and as a spokesman for blacks throughout the United States. From his first book's narrative description of the Montgomery Bus Boycott to his last book's exposition of the rationale behind his final organizing effort, the Poor People's Campaign, King used this medium to explore and defend nonviolence in view of the concrete, present-day realities he and his co-workers were facing as

they sought to transform the cultural and political landscape of their nation. Washington (1986) has captured a powerful array of King's writings, speeches and sermons, including such decisive works as *Letter From Birmingham City Jail* and *A Time To Break Silence*.

With their studies of the movement, from vantage points not fixed in the direction of Martin Luther King Jr., Carson (1981, 2001) and Dittmer (1995) enhance and widen the contextual understanding immensely. Carson's groundbreaking examination of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Dittmer's equally pioneering and overlapping study of the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi help lay to rest the false but widely accepted notion that Martin Luther King Jr. was somehow the sole embodiment of the movement. The many leaders and organizers introduced by Carson and Dittmer, as well as the varying strategies and philosophical bases of those leaders, illustrate the complexity and breadth of the Freedom Struggle. Carson (2001) concludes that "acceptance of the notion that the mass mobilizations of black people during the 1950s and 1960s resulted from top-down leadership has obscured a valuable aspect of the legacy of that era's struggles" (p. 5). The valuable aspect Carson refers to is "the black freedom struggle's largely decentralized structure [which] made it responsive to local needs and encouraged leaders to emerge from groups that were traditionally excluded because of gender, poverty, background, educational deficiencies, and age" (p. 6).

The African-American Freedom Movement through the Gandhian Lens

Gandhian nonviolence represented but one of many elements which the architects of the African-American Freedom Movement drew on. Furthermore, conflicting appraisals of the Gandhian approach were consistently at play during the struggle, and of those individuals who were committed adherents of the Gandhian approach, only a very small handful spoke or wrote explicitly and with any level of specificity about its holistic nature. It follows that charting the

expressions of the Gandhian recipe in the campaigns and trajectory of the Freedom Movement requires a great deal of interpretation. This interpretive work has been informed by a wide diversity of sources.

Personal Transformation

The spirituality of the African-American Freedom Movement has been explored by many authors from many different angles. These explorations uncover a great deal about the personally transformative nature of the movement for countless individuals, an aspect of the movement which, through the Gandhian lens, is of prime importance. Hefner's (2004) comparative interpretation of Gandhi's and King's approaches to nonviolent action argues that there is an indivisible connection between militant nonviolence and individuals' spiritual transformation. Simpson (2008) weaves this same foundational understanding into his discussion of the nonviolent activist's challenge to "change the face of three enemies: the face of the oppressed, the face of the oppressor, and the face of the oppressive system" (p. 60). He asserts that love, made tangible through nonviolent action, provides the power for such transformation, and that when it is adopted as a way of life, such nonviolence "changes the face of the first enemy, the enemy within" (61). Paris (2008) and Large (1991) examine the intersection of nonviolence, ethics, and personal character in the thought and discourse of Martin Luther King Jr., as a reflection of the movement of which he was arguably the best articulator and interpreter. And, Dantley (2003), Erskine (2001), and West (1993) contextualize the topic of personal transformation within the specific framework of the black church and prophetic black spirituality, which many argue represented the cornerstone of the Freedom Movement.

Music is another key element of the African-American Freedom Movement that relates closely to this theme of personal transformation. This element is treated in many of the texts

already cited, and is very succinctly and usefully covered in the liner notes booklet accompanying a collection of unrehearsed live recordings published by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (1997), titled “Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs 1960-1966.” This booklet, penned by singer and Freedom Movement veteran Bernice Johnson Reagan discusses the historical foundations of the freedom songs that punctuated the movement, the significance of the language incorporated in those songs, and the character of the mass meetings where most movement singing took place. Reagan calls the songs of the Freedom Movement “musical images...of a people in conversation about their determination to be free” (p. 2). Her account provides a window into the transformative power that music brought to those who carried the movement forward.

Constructive Program

Concrete projects of social uplift and renewal played a crucial role during the Freedom Movement, and though they were not systemized to the extent of Gandhi’s “Constructive Programme” they represent its counterpart within the U.S. context of the civil rights era. Branch (1988) and Garrow (2004) offer important descriptions of the multivalent character of the black church, as setting not only for religious and spiritual fellowship and formation, but as the hub of what functioned as an alternate society carved out in the midst of the segregated South. Morris (1981) explores this theme further and joins Favors (2008) in considering the similar nature and role played by the historic black colleges, which acted as an oasis and training ground for many key Freedom Movement activists and theoreticians, including Martin Luther King Jr. and a great number of SNCC’s most influential leaders. Carson’s (1981) and Dittmer’s (1995) seminal works include extensive discussion about the efforts of SNCC organizers in the realms of voter registration, Freedom Schools, food co-ops, and other social programs. Charron’s (2009)

presentation of the life and work of Septima Clark, a hugely influential Freedom Movement educator, and Myles Horton's (1998) treatment of the history of the Highlander Folk School help fill out the picture of the key role played by alternative grassroots education throughout the movement years. Building on this narrative, transformative education theorists Heany and Horton (1990) cite the Highlander Folk School's role during the Freedom Movement as a cogent example illustrating the contribution that "emancipatory education" (p. 95) can make in the building up of social movements.

Political Action

In addition to the biographical-historical works already cited, which include detailed descriptions and analyses of all the key political campaigns of the African-American Freedom Movement, there is literature that further illuminates how the movement manifested the political action component of the Gandhian schema. Carson (2005) argues persuasively that within the political realm Martin Luther King Jr. helped the Freedom Movement "negotiate a path between the widening extremes of black militancy and moderation" (p. 20). As previously alluded to, Carson (2001) similarly argues that the movement struck a vital balance between grassroots community organizing and mass mobilization. Bob Moses, key SNCC organizer, serves as a helpful guide to the community organizing side of the coin. In *Radical Equations* (2001) he describes the community organizing tradition as espoused by Ella Baker, which she transmitted to the young men and women who formed SNCC. He remarks that the tradition is characterized by "quiet work in out-of-the-way places and the commitment of organizers digging into local communities" (p. 4). Moses himself is the focus of a study by Jensen and Hammerback (2000), which describes the elements of the community organizing tradition and ethic in contrast to those of the community mobilizing tradition. The political action of Martin Luther King Jr., who has

come to epitomize the community or mass mobilizing tradition, is the subject of two studies that further clarify the movement's experimentation in the political realm. These articles by Harding (1983) and Smith (1989) focus specifically on the final phase of King's career, when his thinking and approach to nonviolence reached their most radical expression. In his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), King shows his unusually firm grasp on the concept and applicability of Gandhian *satyagraha*, with his own six-pointed rendering of its characteristics as they had begun to be expressed within the context of the emerging movement in the American South (pp. 89-95). To abbreviate King's thorough explanation, he argues that nonviolent resistance: (1) is active, not passive, (2) seeks reconciliation, not victory over, (3) fights injustice rather than persons behaving unjustly, (4) requires the willingness to suffer without retaliating, (5) rejects physical and spiritual violence (hate, ill will, humiliation, etc.), and (6) flows from and is strengthened by the spiritual conviction that the universe itself is on the side of justice and truth (pp. 90-95).

GANDHI/KING COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

While a multitudinous array of books and articles have been written on Gandhi and King, and the respective social movements of which they were a part, few authors have sought to carefully compare and contrast them. This study has been enriched by the efforts of those few. After exploring the nature of violence and nonviolence, and offering biographical sketches of the Gandhi and King, Nojeim (2004) presents his comparative analysis of their roles as political leaders, religious devotees, family men, and heroes. This analysis draws interesting distinctions between Gandhi's and King's leadership styles, styles of engagement with opponents, personal choices, and views on economics. Dalton (1993) takes a much more creative tack, comparing not only Gandhi and King, but also bringing Malcolm X into the fold. Dalton concludes that

while Malcolm X displayed a deep, intuitive understanding of Gandhi's interpretation of *swaraj*, self-rule, Martin Luther King Jr. displayed an equally strong grasp of Gandhian *satyagraha*, nonviolent resistance. In another study, which leans heavily on Erikson's (1969) previously mentioned work, Hefner (2004) describes the movements led by Gandhi and King "as ventures for reforming society that are rooted in altruism and spiritual transformation" (p. 264), and illustrates their fundamental likeness. Mary King (1999) offers an additional valuable resource titled *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action*. While not directly comparative in nature, Mary King's thorough parallel treatments of the two leaders, culminating in case studies of nonviolent campaigns that they influenced around the world, convey the strength of their harmonious approaches to nonviolent organizing, and the depth of their shared impact.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

Current discourse on transformative leadership in the still-emerging field of leadership studies has brought new insights into the dialectical leader/follower relationship and the nature of social change itself. Heifetz (1994) views leadership in terms of "adaptive work" (pp. 30-31), which he describes as addressing and transforming values or the gap between professed values and behavior. A person exercising leadership, therefore, facilitates people's processes of clarifying values, building readiness to align their values with their behavior, then tackling the hard work of doing so. The leader coordinates "the exposure and orchestration of conflict...for mobilizing people to learn new ways" (p. 22). Burns (2003) identifies the fundamental aspects of the process of social change as motivation, values, conflict, and what he calls "the leader-follower paradox" (p. 171), concluding that leadership is best understood as a dynamic system within which actors move in and out of leader and follower roles, grounded in a shared values

system and propelled forward by conflict. Jahan (2000) discusses the nature and qualities of transformative leadership from a feminist perspective, confronting the conventional male-centered leadership paradigm characterized by competition and domination. Jahan points to participatory, egalitarian, transparent and empowering models of leadership as an emerging paradigm that will serve causes of justice and equity.

The work of such leadership theorists finds an interesting complement in contemporary discourse in the field of transformative learning theory. The intersection of these two disciplines sheds light on the nature of leadership and the possibilities of nurturing the development of leaders rooted in the theory and practice of nonviolence. Mezirow (1990, 1997) and Cranton (2002) detail the transformative learning process with emphasis on the relationship between one's self-concept and the work of critically assessing and transcending one's long-held meaning perspectives. This process, which recalls Heifetz's (1994) assertion that exercising leadership centers on the work of mobilizing people to bring their values into alignment with their behavior, is remarkably resonant with the Gandhian approach to conflict, as illustrated by King's leadership in the U.S. context. Heifetz treats this in great detail with his description of King's role during the Selma campaign of 1965 (pp. 208-231), concluding that King's effectiveness as a leader during that pivotal struggle was largely due to his skill as an orchestrator and facilitator of what amounted to a national learning experience. In Selma, "by dramatizing forcefully the contradictions within the nation," Heifetz explains, "King made people feel the contradictions in their own attitudes. In this way, he deflected attention from himself to the issues and spread responsibility for working them through" (p. 227).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the tradition of qualitative research. Glesne (1999) suggests that qualitative research is a process of “gathering words” (p. 4), wherein the researcher intentionally draws from a variety of perspectives in order to derive untapped and multilayered meanings about her given subject. My own process of “gathering words” has incorporated mutually supportive methods, including a review of the relevant literature and an interview series with six men and women who were active participants in the African-American Freedom Movement during the 1950s and/or 1960s. My interview series is illustrative of interpretive phenomenology, a strand of qualitative research that uses interviews with a combination of open-ended and structured questioning, and which seeks to uncover meaning in the consequent narratives (Maggs-Rapport, 2000, p. 219).

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

This study has been influenced by the expectations of an accredited University in the United States, which requires certain pre-ordained structures and a general level of formalism. The written thesis form itself is representative of the dominant Western approach to research and the communication of findings—an approach which is typically linear and which tends toward the presumption that rationality and rhetorical skill are or ought to be universally accepted as foremost values (Nisbett, 2003, p. 196). These factors and my embeddedness in the academic culture and epistemologies that give rise to them have undoubtedly influenced and limited my findings and my presentation.

I have engaged in this study as a white, Western-educated, politically-left, social change activist male from the United States. Tim Wise (2010) argues candidly that this sort of résumé poses a serious dilemma in terms of navigating “white privilege and perspectivism” (p. 7) in the

United States milieu. Wise argues that liberal whites, given their position of privilege, have a strong tendency to “disregard the lived realities of people of color,” and in so doing they “reinscribe the concerns of whites as those of paramount importance” (p. 8). My lived realities have included economic, educational, environmental, and occupational privilege for my entire life. This has afforded me the luxury of observing or working on social justice causes with a detachment unknown to people of color in our society who have not been on the receiving end of such a privileged status. During the course of my research, my ability to consider issues of equality, civil rights, nonviolent action, and the like, from a place of privileged remove, has most definitely impacted my findings. While I have conducted various experiments in the realm of nonviolence, I have not directly experienced the oppression that lies at the heart of my chosen subject. This is a serious limitation.

I am aware of a related bias that also impacts my study. I have come to this consideration of the African-American Freedom Movement through the Gandhian lens by way of a decade’s research and personal practice inspired by Gandhi’s theory and practice of nonviolence. I have come to consider myself an aspirant of the Gandhian approach because of my belief in it as a remarkable conduit for social change and for the building up of a nonviolent life. My objectivity is necessarily compromised by my adherence to this approach, and the scope of my research has no doubt been limited by it.

Because of my privileged status as a white male in U.S. society, and because of my self-professed identity as an aspirant of the Gandhian approach, I am aware that I am particularly susceptible to four errors that Minnich (1990) cites as basic to the dominant Western tradition of thought. These are: (1) *faulty generalization*, wherein I tend to universalize my own believed abstractions, (2) *circular reasoning*, wherein my chosen standards, regardless of whether they

are well founded or argued, color my interpretations, (3) *mystified concepts*, wherein concepts and interpretations that are extremely familiar to me and which I have rehearsed over and over again (“nonviolence” or “Gandhi,” for example) become unquestioned, and (4) partial knowledge, which basically sums up the end-product of the first three errors’ handiwork (pp. 51-52). While I trust that my awareness of these hazards has enabled me to avoid some of their effects, I am certain that they have left their imprint. Given that unfortunate state of affairs, I can only hope that this explanation will give the reader some helpful grains of salt with which to consider my presentation.

NAVIGATING THE LITERATURE

Glesne (1999) summarizes several ways that the thorough exploration of literature in a researcher’s given field is essential to her success (pp. 19-21). Such a review helps the researcher confirm that she has selected a justifiable topic, enables her to achieve a greater sense of focus for her topic, and helps her to effectively design her research methods and interview questions. For each of these reasons a varied, interdisciplinary review of the literature has been a key piece of this study. Additionally, because this study largely hinges on the philosophical and historical aspects of its topic—aspects which have been widely and well documented—it has necessarily depended on literature as its primary analytical lens.

As described in the introductory chapter, an undergraduate course on the theory and practice of nonviolence provided my introduction to substantive literature on the subject. My studies continued informally as an independent exploration of nonviolence literature, with specific focus on Gandhi’s life and teaching. In time that informal approach evolved into focused, formal research into Martin Luther King Jr. and the African-American Freedom

Movement, utilizing the theoretical lenses of Gandhian nonviolence and current discourse on transformative leadership.

Comparative consideration of King, Gandhi, and transformative leadership has supported this study in three significant ways. First, it has served to clarify the subject's historical framework. Second, it has provided a useful point of departure for deliberation on the relevance and potential application of nonviolence in our current context. And third, it has unearthed key descriptions of important theoretical features of the topic. Note, for example, the resonant perspectives of these three lenses on the connection between the individual and the collective within the realm of social change. The Gandhian view holds that "the quest for self-realisation [is] also the quest for actualizing the spiritual and moral values one aspire[s] for in the institutions and processes of the social order" (Mathai, 2000, p. 154). The inception of the Kingian view has been summed up as the work of bridging "the gap between who we are and who we ought to be," both as individuals and as a societal community (Large, 1991, pp. 52-53). And, as touched on in the previous chapter, transformative leadership theory similarly maintains that the exercise of leadership "diminish[es] the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face," through the skillful "orchestration of conflict...within individuals and constituencies" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 22).

THE INTERVIEW SERIES

As mentioned previously, while navigating the literature Vincent Harding's (2008) *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero* found its way into my hands and heart. Harding is a veteran of the African-American Freedom Movement and he was a close personal friend of Martin Luther King. After reading his book I realized how much I wanted to sit with him, how much I wanted to talk with him and listen to his thoughts about the movement and about

nonviolence at this juncture in his life. I wanted to be on the receiving end of more of his wisdom. I was mindful of Harding's age—at the time of this writing he is just shy of 80 years old—and of how many Freedom Movement veterans have already died, including Harding's wife, Rosemarie. It occurred to me that an incredible opportunity was in front of me, if I chose to seize it. In time it also occurred to me that I not only wanted to connect with Harding, I wanted to sit down with other elders too, other architects of this most important movement, this most important chapter of our national story. I wanted to get that story into my bones, as much as might be possible, and I could not imagine doing that without their help and presence. I was drawn, therefore, to conduct interviews, which Glesne (1999) aptly calls "distance-reducing experiences" (p. 93) and which she maintains represent a vital means for developing the understanding of the qualitative researcher.

I placed an interview series at the heart of my proposed degree plan. Vincent Harding was pleased at my interest and offered his advice as to who might be compelling conversation partners for me. We began to compile a list and Dr. Harding helped out with contact information from his prodigious address book. While our list grew to twelve names, we agreed that six interviewees would represent a realistic sample. I put out the call, seeking to include an even mix of men and women with distinct points of view on the Freedom Movement and on its relevance for contemporary social change agents. In the end, because of availability, logistics, and timing, I interviewed a total of four men and two women: Vincent Harding, Ruby Sales, James Lawson, Harry Belafonte, Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, and Robert Moses. As their biographical sketches illustrate (see appendices), my interviewees represent a fascinating spectrum with regards to the Freedom Movement, each having played a unique role during the

movement, and each holding differing attitudes and unique interpretations of what happened then, and what it means in terms of now.

All but two of my interviews were conducted in person—the exceptions being my final two interviews, with Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons and Robert Moses, which were conducted by phone. The interviews averaged just under two hours in duration and the audio of each was recorded digitally. I received written informed consent from the interviewees (see appendices) for the use of their interview transcript for the purpose of my research.

The interviews were semi-structured. I came to each interview with seven or eight detailed questions prepared, but consistently strayed from or revised my questions depending on the responses of the interviewees. (Sample interview questions are included in the appendices.) Because the six interviews were spread across three semesters, each time I sat down with an interviewee I was working through a different set of research questions and themes related to my subject. My preparation for each interview was necessarily informed by such emerging research questions and themes, along with the preparatory reading I had done to better familiarize myself with the philosophy, work, and history of each respective participant. At times during the course of an interview the process naturally shifted from a formal question and answer format into a more conversational mode.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first explores the meaning and application of the three core aspects of the Gandhian approach to nonviolence: personal transformation, constructive program, and political action. The second part considers the African-American Freedom Movement as a case study in Gandhian nonviolence, identifying various ways in which the three primary aspects of the Gandhian recipe were or were not manifested by the movement, and drawing conclusions as to its impact in the U.S. context of that time.

THE THREE-FOLD APPROACH OF GANDHIAN NONVIOLENCE

The Gandhian conception of applied nonviolence entails a combination of what Burrowes (1996) calls “three essential elements” (p. 101). These are “personal nonviolence as a way of life, constructive work to create the new society, and nonviolent resistance to direct and structural violence” (p. 101-102). Sharp (1979) echoes this distillation, concluding that the Gandhian approach has “three main parts: (1) the improvement of individuals in their own lives and ways of living; (2) a constructive program to begin building a new social order even as the old one still exists; and (3) the practice of various forms of nonviolent action against specific social evils” (p. 81). Following the lead of nonviolence trainers Joanne Sheehan (2006) and John Humphries (2008), for the purpose of this study the features of the Gandhian recipe outlined by Burrowes and Sharp have been condensed to personal transformation, constructive program, and political action.

Before turning to the analysis, two considerations deserve emphasis. The first is to clarify that there is no evidence that Gandhi himself categorized his approach in this way. Rather, this three-tiered formulation has been superimposed by scholars such as Burrowes (1996) and Sharp (1979) on Gandhi’s experiments in the field of nonviolence, in order to establish a

clear framework for interpretation and analysis. A second, related point is that these three aspects of the Gandhian approach should by no means be construed as watertight compartments, discrete from one another. A drawback to employing this categorization is that it lends an implication of separateness or distinctiveness between aspects that are intrinsically intertwined and mutually supportive.

Personal Transformation

This section begins with an examination of the philosophical foundation of the Gandhian search for *swaraj* at the personal level. It then moves to consider the eleven vows maintained at Gandhi's ashram communities—vows which represented some of the most essential elements of Gandhi's recipe for personal transformation in the Indian context of his time. The section closes with discussion of additional principles and practices that augmented the regimen illustrated by the eleven vows.

Philosophical Basis

The term *swaraj*, self-rule, holds great significance in the dictionary of Gandhian nonviolence, and it does well to set the stage for our consideration of personal transformation within the Gandhian schema. While the conventional translation of *swaraj* denotes political liberty, Gandhi used the term comprehensively. Burns (2003) presents *swaraj* as the “supreme goal” Gandhi set before India (p.155). He describes it this way:

Swaraj literally meant self-rule, and in Gandhi's reformulation of the concept, it stood above all for freedom, both political and spiritual. While he accepted Western liberties of thought and speech, true freedom meant ‘disciplined rule from within.’ Swaraj fused independence from racial or colonial oppression with *inward* liberation, a transformation

of both society and self; indeed, the ‘swaraj of a people,’ he said, was the ‘sum total’ of the swaraj of individuals. (p. 155)

The key, Gandhi argued, to bringing about the desired shift in the political realm was for Indians to overcome their sense of inferiority vis-à-vis their British occupiers. “To command respect,” Gandhi said, “is the first step to Swaraj” (Fischer, 1950, p. 260). Fischer summarizes: “This was Gandhi’s refrain: dignity, discipline, and restraint would bring Indians self-respect, therefore respect, therefore freedom” (p. 260). This provides an excellent description of the rationale behind Gandhi’s dictates with regards to the foundational work of “self-purification” (Mathai, 2000, p. 120), which we term here “personal transformation.”

It follows that Gandhi’s insistence that India’s political freedom was bound up with the personal, inward freedom of the people was not meant to perpetuate a spirituality disconnected from concrete, outward expression. Political independence was dependent on the Indian people’s reclamation of their sense of personal dignity, as evidenced not by adherence to a given set of spiritual disciplines devoid of concrete social significance, but by principled daily conduct that gave outward expression to true self-discipline, and which represented the greater society’s strides toward liberation. While this work of reclaiming one’s full stature as a human being was essentially spiritual, its mark was transformed patterns and behaviors in daily life. (Mathai, 2000, p. 154; Fischer, 1950, p. 340)

It will be helpful at this juncture to consider the juxtaposition of two of the most fundamental attributes of Gandhi’s philosophy—the centrality of the individual and the unity of means and ends. To a great extent the realm of personal transformation in the Gandhian schema hinges on the interplay of these two philosophical convictions. Mathai (2000) argues that for Gandhi “the individual is the key figure in all transactions...the measure of all things and the

supreme consideration" (p. 154). He further contends that "a shift in emphasis from the lower to higher self of the human individual was the point of departure for Gandhi in his pursuit of a new social order and the higher goals of life" (p. 239). In the field of social transformation Gandhi recognized the individual as the fundamental and most basic agent. This insight, coupled with his strict belief in the intrinsic equivalency of means and ends, helps explain Gandhi's insistence that the work of self-discipline and self-purification was indispensable. As the primary instrument in the nonviolent struggle for freedom, the individual, in his own life and person, needed to reflect the desired outcome of that struggle. This required training.

Eleven Vows

Gandhi's own experiments and the expectations he held for members of his ashram communities provide a window into his vision of such training. In order to cultivate the personal side of the *swaraj* equation, Gandhi identified eleven specific vows. These vows do not capture the totality of the personal transformation aspect of the Gandhian schema, but they do well to illustrate its essence and breadth. While the principles and practices Gandhi outlined were designed for specific implementation in the ashram setting, he intended that they be instructive for the nation at large. He called on his fellow Indians, however far-flung they may have been from his or any other spiritual community, to take notice:

I am not here asking you to crowd into the ashram, there is no room there. But I say that every one of you may enact that ashram life individually and collectively.

I shall be satisfied with anything that you may choose from the rules I have ventured to place before you and act up to it. (Gandhi, 1999a, p. 26)

The vows Gandhi prescribed ran as follows: Truth, *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *asteya* (non-stealing), *aparigraha* (non-possession), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), control of the palate, bread

labor, fearlessness, equality of religions, *swadeshi* (self-reliance), and non-observance of untouchability (Gandhi, 1999a, pp. 29-33). A brief description of each will serve to illustrate the full thrust of this spiritual training program designed to speed the manifestation of *swaraj*.

Truth

Gandhi (1999a) claimed that “Truth is God, the one and only Reality” (p. 29), and that adherence to Truth’s dictates, therefore, as far as one is able to discern them, represents the first, most fundamental observance. Mathai (2000), inferring the ethical and social implications of such a commitment, explains that “Truth, according to Gandhi, was the substance of morality” and as such “in the ethical sense, must become the basis of human co-existence” (p. 122). “In short,” Mathai concludes, “one must observe the law of Truth in thought, word and deed and in all walks of life” (p. 122).

Ahimsa

Gandhi viewed *ahimsa* (nonviolence) as an attribute of Truth, and in his written explication of the eleven observances he refers to it interchangeably as love. The law of love, Gandhi maintains, calls us to cultivate equal regard for all forms of life, to practice love of enemy, and to develop the willingness and capacity to suffer in the cause of Truth, without enmity for those that inflict the suffering. This flows from *ahimsa*’s basis in the belief that all of life is characterized by an intrinsic, underlying unity. Gandhi (1972) claimed that nonviolence is “the greatest force at the disposal of mankind” (p. 77), and this vow was meant to strengthen the capacity of the individual to become a conduit for that supreme force.

Asteya

Gandhi (1999a) claimed that the heart of the principle of *asteya*, non-stealing, was the “fine truth...that Nature provides just enough, and no more, for our daily need” (p. 31). This

vow, therefore, goes well beyond an abstention from theft in the conventional sense. For Gandhi, non-stealing meant not possessing more than one's basic sustenance requires. He also indicated that adherents of the vow of *asteya* should not use borrowed items except for the purpose for which they were borrowed, and to not keep things for longer than they were lent (p. 31). He warned against covetousness as the seed of theft, and did not limit theft to material possessions alone, noting that ideas can be stolen as easily as things (p. 132). He concluded that "one who takes up the observance of non-stealing has...to be humble, vigilant and in habits simple" (p. 133).

Aparigraha

Aparigraha, non-possession, is a twin observance to *asteya*. *Aparigraha* entails the "progressive simplification of one's own life" (Gandhi, 1999a, p. 31), and learning to live without provision for the future. While Gandhi cited the "seeming impossibility" of fully achieving this ideal, he insisted that *aparigraha* denotes a way of life characterized by complete trust that God will provide "our daily bread, meaning everything that we require" (p.133, 134), and by a readiness to relinquish all possessions, including one's bodily life. As Mathai (2000) explains, the combination of *aparigraha* and *asteya* gave rise to Gandhi's economic theory of "Trusteeship" (pp.196-198), which holds that any possession that comes into a person's hands is not actually owned by him. Rather, it has been entrusted to him by God, for the service of all.

Brahmacharya

Gandhi (1972) argued that vast stores of energy and power could be harnessed through "the preservation of and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for the creation of life" (p. 101). This was the basis for his insistence that the vow of *brahmacharya*, celibacy, was essential for those who wanted "to have a glimpse of real religious life" or to dedicate their lives to

“national service” (Gandhi, 1999a, p. 40). “If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man,” Gandhi contended, “what is there left for all the world besides?” (p. 125) While emphasizing its significance with regards to the sexual impulse, Gandhi contended that *brahmacharya* should be extended further, to indicate “self-control in all directions” (p. 128). He cites its very close connection, therefore, to the vow of control of the palate.

Control of the palate

As with the sexual impulse, Gandhi (1999a) believed that vast stores of vitality could be harnessed through mastery of the palate, and that such vitality could then be redirected toward the pursuit of self-realization and the work of public service. Gandhi encouraged his fellows to look on food as they would medicine, “that is, without thinking whether it is palatable or otherwise, and only in quantities limited to the needs of the body” (p. 128). Gandhi believed that “perpetual vigilance” would enable the adherent of this vow to discern when one eats for “self-indulgence, and when in order only to sustain the body” (p. 130).

Bread labor

Borrowing the phrase from Tolstoy, who had borrowed it from the Russian writer Bondaref, Gandhi saw “bread labor,” that is, physical labor by which a person sustains her physical existence, as an essential element of nonviolent living (Mathai, 2000, pp. 135-137). Gandhi called on all Indians, regardless of caste, rank, or status to toil for their own sustenance. It follows that, “through the observance of this vow, [Gandhi] helped to revolutionise people’s attitude to work by highlighting the dignity of labour” (p. 137). Forms of bread labor varied according to physical ability and context, and included agriculture, spinning, weaving, and many other forms of “productive labour connected with the primary necessities of life” (p.136).

Fearlessness

Gandhi (1999a) saw the pursuit of fearlessness as essential to the building up of a nonviolent life, believing it to be a pre-requisite for the earnest search for truth. He explained that “fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear—fear of disease, bodily injury, death, of dispossession, of losing one’s nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offense, and so on” (p. 136). While acknowledging that perfect fearlessness could only be enjoyed by one who attains full self-realization, Gandhi nevertheless encouraged his fellows to “progress toward [the] goal by determined and constant endeavor, and by cultivating self-confidence” (p. 136).

Equality of religions

Gandhi’s ashrams, campaigns, and prayer meetings were characteristically interfaith. While he sometimes wrote of “religious tolerance,” he emphasized his preference for the concept of “religious equality,” as the word “tolerance” fails to denote the level of reverence he believed should be afforded to all the great religious paths (Gandhi, 1999a, p. 141). He describes his universalist view as follows:

The principal faiths of the world constitute a revelation of Truth, but as they have all been outlined by imperfect man, they have been affected by imperfections and alloyed with untruth. One must therefore entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as one accords to one’s own. Where such tolerance becomes a law of life, conflict between different faiths becomes impossible, and so does all effort to convert other people to one’s own faith. One can only pray that the defects in the various faiths may be overcome, and that they may advance, side by side towards perfection. (p. 33)

Swadeshi

While technically the word *swadeshi* means one's own country, and typically refers to using products made in one's own country rather than those imported from afar (Dalton, 1993, p. 249), Gandhi noted its more personal and relational significance:

A man's first duty is to his neighbor... If every one of us duly performed his duty to his neighbor, no one in the world who needed assistance would be left unattended.

Therefore, one who serves his neighbor serves all the world. (Mathai, 2000, p. 141)

So, while *swadeshi* was associated with the local manufacture and trade of goods, and the boycott of foreign products, in Gandhi's conception it indicated a wider sense of duty and mutual interdependence. According to Nagler (2004):

Swadeshi...is globalism in reverse. It means self-reliance and local action...

It states that by working in your own sphere of influence you create a resonance in widening circles, but if you overextend yourself, if you try to do everything too soon, you lose power there and here. (pp. 169, 185)

So it was that Gandhi stressed that the Indian people focus their attention and efforts close to home and to only extend beyond that inner circle of concern if gifted with an unusual capacity for service. He was confident that the positive effects of local effort would ripple well beyond one's immediate context (Mathai, 2000, pp. 141-143).

Non-observance of untouchability

Gandhi (1999a) maintained that the social sanction of untouchability represented "rank irreligion fit only to be destroyed" (p. 138). Fischer (1950) describes Gandhi's perspective that untouchability represented "segregation gone mad," and claims that "in fighting it [Gandhi] defied a thousand taboos and roused a million fears, superstitions, hates, and vested interests" (p.

142). Gandhi's emphatic denunciation of the practice found its concrete application in what was, at least initially, his deeply controversial insistence that his ashram communities welcome untouchables (so-called) as full and equal members (pp. 142-146). "Removal of untouchability for Gandhi," Mathai (2000) summarizes, "was not just an attempt to purify Hinduism of an ineffable blot. It meant love for and service of the whole world and thus merged into *ahimsa*" (p. 135).

~

With regards to the eleven vows, it is important to note that Gandhi's firm resolve was tempered by a recognition that individuals' abilities and levels of stamina varied greatly. In the face of his dictates, which many believed to be too exacting, Gandhi (1999a) offered the following words of encouragement:

No one need take fright at my observations, or give up the effort in despair. The taking of a vow does not mean that we are able to observe it completely from the beginning; it does mean constant and honest effort in thought, word, and deed with a view to its fulfillment... We humble seekers can but put forth a slow but steady effort, which is sure to win divine grace for us in God's good time. (pp. 129-130)

Additional Considerations

While the eleven vows offer a valuable window into Gandhi's prescription for the training required to advance the cause of *swaraj*, numerous aspects remain unexplored. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this study, only some of these can be briefly noted here.

It is vital to recognize that Gandhi's entire regimen, as detailed above, was anchored by a disciplined prayer practice, and was always geared toward service of others, especially the

suffering poor. These were fundamental underpinnings of the Gandhian recipe for personal transformation. Vegetarianism and natural healing practices (Brown, 1989, pp. 92-93) were key marks of Gandhi's world-view and life-style, and were derivative of his vows related to Truth and *ahimsa*. The sublimation of anger was a significant corollary to *brahmacharya* and the control of the palate, in that the emotion of anger represented, for Gandhi, another reservoir of energy and vitality that could be harnessed and redirected toward nonviolent ends (see Nagler, 2004, pp. 60-63, 83-86). Lifestyle considerations, such as clothing, housing and transportation were key aspects of Gandhi's program of self-discipline as well. One need only note the transformation in Gandhi's personal habits over the course of his adult life to highlight the point. As a law student in Britain in his early twenties, mimicking his idealized version of a British gentleman, Gandhi could be seen wearing an expensive evening suit and nothing less than a top-hat (Rajmohan Gandhi, 2008, p. 31). In contrast, From 1921 until his death in 1948, the loincloth had become his principal garment (Fischer, 1950, p. 193). While enjoying a lucrative law practice in South Africa, prior to establishing his first land-based community, Gandhi rented "an English villa at the beach a few doors down from the Attorney-General's home" (p. 59). In contrast, at Sevagram ashram, during the last chapter of his life's journey, Gandhi lived in a mud hut which mirrored the habitations of the Indian peasantry (Rajmohan Gandhi, 2008, pp. 380-81). As for transportation, throughout his career Gandhi's preference was to ride third class rail, in solidarity with the poor masses. Fischer (1950) remarks that by 1925 Gandhi mourned that he was no longer able to travel "like a poor man," as "his co-workers made him travel in a second-class compartment" so he could attend to his voluminous correspondence and other writing projects, as well as his need for rest (p. 227).

As previously noted, in the Gandhian schema the work of personal transformation was never separate from the social sphere. This is transparently implicit in several of the vows previously discussed—equality of religions, *swadeshi*, and non-observance of untouchability, for example. Brown (1989) explains this crucial dynamic as follows:

For Gandhi...discipline was never for the sake of the individual's spiritual state alone or perhaps even primarily: it was self-purification for true vision, but also for the sake of service. This insistence on a life of service as the practical working out of the search for truth was firmly established in Gandhi... He was never at rest in the purely contemplative tradition, but believed passionately that as sparks of truth, of ultimate reality, lay in each person, so the truth-seeker must find truth, must find his God, in encounter with and compassion for his fellow man. (p. 83)

So it was that Gandhi (1999b) confessed, “If I could persuade myself that I should find [God] in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find him apart from humanity” (p. 64). Gandhi’s hands-on spirituality, his “practical working out of the search for truth” (Brown, 1989, p. 83), left an indelible mark on the nonviolence movement which raised him up as principal leader. It is critical to add, in this light, that just as constructive work in society was a constituent aspect of the realm of personal transformation, so too was the inherently self-purificatory work of disciplined political action. Personal transformation, the first tier of the Gandhian approach, was fully inclusive of the other two tiers.

In 1945, three years before his death, Gandhi wrote: “I can indicate no royal road to the social revolution, except that we should represent it in every detail of our lives” (Fischer, 1950, p. 340). Louis Fischer’s response to this assertion provides a fitting close to this discussion of the realm of personal transformation in the Gandhian schema:

Gandhi's battlefield, therefore, was the hearts of men. There he made his home. He knew better than anybody how little of the battle had been fought and won. Yet without the social revolution in man's daily conduct, he said, "we will not be able to leave India happier than when we were born." The social revolution could not produce a new man. A new type of man would make the social revolution. (p. 340)

Constructive Program

This section begins with discussion of the philosophical basis of the constructive program, which serves to explain its unique character and location within the tripartite Gandhian model. The 19 projects that Gandhi identified for his national "Constructive Programme" are then listed and two key features of the program, *khadi* and heart unity, are discussed in detail. The section closes with consideration of additional purposes and qualities characteristic of constructive program.

Philosophical Basis

The constructive program, the second tier in the Gandhian design, represents what Dalton (1993) calls the fusion of self-purification and social reform (p. 32). In Gandhi's mind, the establishment of a just social order depended on the collective embodiment of the characteristics he championed for individuals: self-reliance, discipline, service, and nonviolence. The constructive program represented the societal means, in the form of specific projects of social reform, by which such qualities could be developed, independent of the dominant order's exploitative systems and institutions.

To illustrate, Sharp (1979) uses the analogy of a person living in an unsafe, run-down house with a shattered foundation. Rather than retreating to sleep outside in the bitter cold, the "wise person" lays the foundation for a new home while the old one still exists, as it still

provides relative safety and warmth. “As the new structure rises, and is ready for occupation,” Sharp explains, “it is possible to withdraw from section after section of the old one, which finally stands deserted and unneeded” (p. 80).

Gandhi argued that “[the postponement of] social reform till after the attainment of *swaraj* is not to know the meaning of *swaraj*” (Mathai, 2000, p. 257). The new order must be fashioned even as the old one remains. In this way, and only in this way, Gandhi maintained, could true *swaraj* be realized. This had everything to do with the reclamation of self-respect which, Gandhi predicted, the work of concretely enacting the new, nonviolent society would unquestionably instill in the Indian people. This is why Gandhi (1948) remarked that the constructive programme might “otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of *Poorna Swaraj* or complete Independence by truthful and non-violent means” (p. 7). As soon as the Indian people collectively embodied the goals of self-sufficiency and freedom, the political reality would come to reflect that transformation. Thus, the constructive program was illustrative of the means/ends equation that Gandhi held as absolute.

True to character, Gandhi did not consign the constructive program to the realm of theoretics. He drew up a concrete working plan with a total of 19 projects to be undertaken across the nation. Gandhi encouraged people to add to the list depending on the particular needs and character of their given context. The “Constructive Programme” ran as follows: 1) Communal unity, 2) Removal of untouchability, 3) Prohibition of alcoholic drinks and drugs, 4) *Khadi* (promotion of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth), 5) Other village industries, 6) Village sanitation, 7) New or basic education, 8) Adult education, 9) Uplift or liberation of women, 10) Education in health and hygiene, 11) Promotion of provincial languages, 12) Promotion of Hindi as national language, 13) Economic equality, 14) Service of *kisans* (farmers), 15) Organizing

laborers, 16) Service of the *Adivasis* (aborigines), 17) Service of lepers, 18) Service of students, and 19) Improvement of cattle. (Mathai, 2000, pp. 255-256)

An extensive look at each of the above 19 projects is not necessary to illustrate the meaning and place of the constructive program within the comprehensive Gandhian design. Consideration of two key elements, however, will be helpful.

Khadi

Nagler (2004) points out that Gandhi's Constructive Programme had "an overall design, which was extremely simple and could be visualized in a single, oft-repeated image: Constructive Programme was a 'solar system,' Gandhi would often say, and *charkha* (the spinning wheel) was the 'sun'" (p. 166). In sum, the *khadi* campaign, both symbolized and actualized by the spinning wheel, represented the manifestation *par excellence* of *swadeshi*. "It connotes the beginning of economic freedom in all of the country," Gandhi exclaimed. "It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers" (Gandhi, 1948, p. 11). What better way to promote both the inner, attitudinal shift toward self-reliance and its outer proof than to reclaim an ancient village-based industry that had been forfeited to a foreign occupier? What better way to promote and galvanize the *swaraj* movement than to don the home-spun clothing that represented its moral force?

Citing "the powerlessness of the poor" and Gandhi's insistence that the uplift and self-respect of India's peasantry was essential to the building up of *swaraj*, Mary King (1999) describes another vital attribute of the "sun" in Gandhi's constructive program "solar system":

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. (p. 83)

But the social impact of the *khadi* campaign was not limited to the poor. Wealthy Indians participated as well, and in wearing the finished product, the informal homespun uniform of the movement, they experienced a new, powerful sense of national pride and solidarity with their fellows. As Nagler (2004) puts it, “Wearing their beliefs on their bodies, many well-off Indians found out firsthand that brotherhood is more satisfying than status” (p. 170).

It is no accident that Gandhi followed *khadi* in his Constructive Programme recipe with “other village industries.” The spinning wheel was the gateway to revitalizing the village economy, which Gandhi believed to be the surest foundation for the future economy of the nation. Other lost or dwindling industries needed to be revived along with *khadi*, in the same spirit of *swadeshi*, and with the same payoff—meaningful labor, necessary goods, and the personal and collective self-esteem that was *swaraj* in the making.

Heart Unity

Just as several of the points on Gandhi’s Constructive Programme show the unmistakable imprint of *swadeshi*, of “globalism in reverse” (Nagler, 2004, p. 169), roughly half of them clearly hinge on the spiritual quality Gandhi referred to as heart unity. The bitter communalism that characterized relations between Muslims and Hindus, the deep-rooted prejudice and discrimination leveled by the Hindu majority against untouchables, the mistreatment and domination of women by men, the gross disparity between the wealth of the rich and the poverty of the poor, the marginalization of lepers and aborigines, the exploitation of farmers and

laborers—in Gandhi's constructive program each of these represented an opportunity to heal division and to weave outcastes back into the core fabric of India's national life and character.

In order to do so, it is vital to recognize that Gandhi did not point to the realm of laws and policies. When confronted with such social evils, he pointed to the heart, to the law of love.

Gandhi challenged the Indian people to look inward, at the prejudices in their own hearts, stating that “before they dare think of freedom they must be brave enough to love one another...and to trust one another” (Fischer, 1950, p. 223). In the context of the constructive program this is self-purification writ large, and it was up to Indians themselves, at the level of their village life, to discern how such a commission could be concretely carried out. Doing so would be another pivotal embodiment of *swaraj*.

A quick glance at the remaining elements of the constructive program reveal other key concerns and attributes that help fill out Gandhi's overall conception of social reform. Personal and communal health hold a prominent place in the program, as can be seen in the inclusion of village sanitation, education in health and hygiene, and the prohibition of alcoholic drinks and drugs. The realm of education is also strongly pronounced, as in new or basic education, adult education, education in health and hygiene, promotion of provincial languages, promotion of Hindi as national language, and service of students. Each of these could be explored in great detail, but the scope of this study would have us press on.

Even a cursory comparison of the constructive program and the previously discussed realm of personal transformation reveals their commonality. The philosophical framework is equivalent for each, hinging on the dictates of *ahimsa* and *swadeshi*, non-possession and bread labor, heart unity and selfless service. As can be seen, within the Gandhian schema personal

transformation constitutes training for the social reform work outlined in the constructive program. In like manner, the constructive program represents training for the third tier of the Gandhian approach, political action. Mary King (1999) explains:

Self discipline is virtually impossible without respect for oneself and the pride that comes from dignity; and nonviolent resistance is ineffectual without self-discipline. Since self-discipline and training were necessary for *satyagraha* [nonviolent resistance] and techniques such as noncooperation and civil disobedience, the constructive work program...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 for future *satyagrahis* in nonviolent resistance. (pp. 37-38)

Another defining characteristic of Gandhi's constructive program, which by now is most certainly implicit, was that its focus was trained inwardly, on the self-improvement of local communities and the healing of internal social rifts. In the face of British imperialism the constructive program, in effect, ignored the British—a strategic turn with powerful effects. Being that the outcome desired was Indian self-sufficiency and the sense of self-respect that would come from it, the constructive program worked to build rather than to tear down.

It naturally follows that Gandhi laid far greater emphasis on the necessity of the constructive program than on civil disobedience in the political realm. Constructive work in the realm of social reform, he said, was "a hundred times dearer" to him than overtly political work (Mathai, 2000, p. 259).

What's more, Gandhi maintained that the carrying out of the constructive program would itself bring to light the true purpose of political agitation, and reveal when and where it ought to be implemented. As Nagler (2004) explains, "In a world of falsehood, truth is inherently confrontational. A truly constructive program...will bang into obstructions, even without seeking them" (p. 172). Though at times Gandhi would initiate nonviolent forays with the British empire, as in launching the *Salt Satyagraha*, the ultimate purpose of political action was to remove obstacles imposed by an opposing counterpart, not in order to weaken the other, but to clear the way for the continued regeneration of society. For this reason, Nagler argues that constructive program was Gandhi's "main hope." "While nonviolence had an impressive power to protest and disrupt," he explains, "its real power was to create and reconstruct. The tail of protesting wrongs would never wag the dog of building a society" (p. 162).

In the following quotation Gandhi manages to encapsulate the spirit, meaning and purpose of the constructive program vis-à-vis the dominant political powers. In the process he cites the three aspects of the program on which he placed the steadiest, heaviest emphasis: removal of untouchability, communal unity, and *khadi*. (It is interesting to note that Gandhi's friend and co-worker, the British cleric Charles Andrews (2003), argued that prohibition of alcohol and the uplift of women were next in line in terms of Gandhi's prioritization (p. 238).) Gandhi's own assessment will serve well to close this discussion of this crucial second tier of his comprehensive nonviolence approach:

I am certain that it does not require ages for Hindus to discard the error of untouchability, for Hindus and Muslims to shed enmity and accept heart friendship as an eternal factor of national life, for all to adopt the charkha as the only universal means of attaining India's economic salvation, and finally for all to believe that India's freedom lies only through

nonviolence, and no other method. Definite, intelligent and free adoption by the nation of this programme, I hold as the attainment of the substance. The symbol, the transfer of power, is sure to follow, even as the seed truly laid must develop into a tree. (Dalton, 1993, p. 47)

Political Action

Following the pattern of the previous sections, this consideration of political action begins with discussion of the philosophical basis for this aspect of the Gandhian schema, as well as its basic characteristics. To further illustrate, the section continues with discussion of the steps, rules, qualifications, and code of discipline for *satyagrahis* (nonviolent resisters), followed by two case studies of illustrative *satyagraha* campaigns. The section continues with consideration of Gandhian *satyagraha* as an example of “Principled-Revolutionary Nonviolence” (Burrowes, 1996, pp. 100-101), and it closes with discussion of the breadth of *satyagraha*’s reach, extending as it does from the intimate context of the household all the way to the global community.

Philosophical Basis and Basic Characteristics

Political action, within the framework of the Gandhian approach, immediately denotes the foundational concept of *satyagraha*, usually translated into English as either nonviolent action or nonviolent resistance. The word, coined by Gandhi himself as a corrective for the label of passive resistance, translates more literally as soul-force or adherence to truth. While in Gandhi’s conception the term pertains to a technique of conflict that can be applied in any number of contexts, this study places its primary focus on Gandhi’s experimentation with *satyagraha* in the realm of political conflict.

Mathai (2000) observes that “the Gandhian technique of social change is chiefly two-pronged, combining resistance (*satyagraha*) and reconstruction (constructive work)” (p. 255). Other authors, such as Nagler (2004), view constructive program and what he calls “obstructive program,” that is, the resistance element of the Gandhian design, as two constituent aspects of *satyagraha* (p. 160). This study favors Mathai’s characterization and considers *satyagraha* as distinct from constructive program, despite their obvious interrelatedness.

Burrowes’ (1996) states that “*satyagraha* was Gandhi’s attempt to evolve a theory of politics and conflict resolution that could accommodate his moral system” (p. 108). *Satyagraha*, therefore, was characterized by Gandhi’s effort to bring to bear on political matters the principles discussed in the previous two sections, namely Truth, *ahimsa*, the unity of means and ends, service, non-attachment, and the preservation of personal dignity. As in the realms of personal transformation and constructive program, Gandhi attached particular significance to this latter characteristic of dignity, asserting that “the first principle of non-violent action is that of non-cooperating with anything humiliating” (Merton, 1964, p. 29).

These core philosophical underpinnings gave rise to the key feature of the Gandhian approach to conflict, which is that a *satyagrahi* enters a conflict situation with a willingness to undergo suffering and a devout refusal to inflict it. There are two principal reasons for this core commitment. First, Gandhi’s strict belief in the unity of means and ends precluded any form of violence, as violence would invariably breed further violence and would in turn disrupt progress in the direction of restored community and a heightened collective experience of human dignity. Second, the *satyagrahi*’s voluntary submission to suffering, if endured for a truthful cause and through nonviolent means, represented a potent means of conversion for the opponent.

Heading from the philosophical basis of *satyagraha* toward its concrete implementation, Burrowes (1996) identifies three of its basic characteristics (p. 108). The first is that “*satyagraha* implies cooperation with the opponent *as a person*...[but] noncooperation with the opponent’s *role*” within the context of an exploitative social structure. Second, the *satyagrahi*’s commitment to building relationships conducive to mutual growth and reconciliation moves her to remain ever-open to compromise “when basic principles have not been challenged.” And third, with regards to forging the resolution of a conflict, the *satyagrahi* seeks “synthesis or transcendence.” That is, she seeks a resolution that synthesizes and hopefully transcends the sum of the elements of truth brought to bear by the parties to the conflict.

Steps, Rules, Qualifications, and Code of Discipline

A review of the steps and rules that characterized *satyagraha* campaigns, along with the qualifications and code of discipline for *satyagrahis*, will be illustrative of the character of the method.

Erikson (1969) presents a succinct distillation of Bondurant’s (1988) treatment of the steps and rules that characterized *satyagraha* campaigns during the course of Gandhi’s leadership in India. The preliminary steps in a Gandhian campaign were “an objective investigation of the facts, followed by a sincere attempt at arbitration.” As *satyagraha* was reserved as a last resort, following sincere efforts to overcome the conflict through dialog and arbitration, and because a readiness to endure self-suffering was requisite to the adoption of *satyagraha* to redress a given injustice, “thorough preparation of all would-be participants” constituted the next stage in the unfolding campaign. Participants needed to be sure that they were on the side of truth as they understood it, and they needed to be prepared to “abide by the nonviolent code.” The next step in the process was to openly announce the plan of action, with

an attached “clear ultimatum binding to all, and yet permitting the resumption of arbitration at any stage of the enfolding action.” This was to be followed by efforts to achieve the widest possible publicity, “to induce the public either to intervene in advance, or to provide public pressure in support of the action to be taken.” Then, at the direction of a chosen leader or action committee, “forms of non-cooperation—strike, boycott, civil disobedience—as would seem fitting as the minimum force necessary to reach a defined goal” would be undertaken. To recap, according to Erikson the steps in a Gandhian campaign ran as follows: investigation of the facts, arbitration, preparation, announcement of the plan of action and adjoining ultimatum (with an open-ended invitation to resume arbitration), publicity, and active non-cooperation. (Erikson, 1969, pp. 414-415)

Erikson (1969) continues by describing some of the essential rules to be observed by nonviolent resisters in a Gandhian campaign. Such resisters “must rely on themselves” and “keep the initiative” (p. 417), without resorting to dependence on outside assistance and with a readiness to adapt and readjust in order to maintain the self-reliant character of the movement. Throughout, resisters must remain “willing to persuade and to enlighten, even as [they remain] ready to be persuaded and enlightened” (p. 416). This twin resolve is a hallmark of the *satyagraha* approach, flowing from Gandhi’s insistence that while no one is privy to the whole truth, everyone is privy to some fragment of the truth. Gandhi held that, by its nature, the *satyagraha* method sought to invite forth such pieces of the truth from both sides of the conflict. The *satyagrahi* should stand ready to assist the opponent “in any unforeseen situation which might rob him of his freedom to remain a counterplayer” in the conflict, and to keep one’s demands consistent, resisting the temptation to expand beyond the “chosen and defined issues” (p. 416).

Gandhi (2001) identified seven qualifications that he held to be essential for every *satyagrahi*. As with his Constructive Programme, Gandhi remarked that this list was not meant to be exhaustive but, rather, illustrative:

- (1) He must have a living faith in God, for He is his only Rock.
- (2) He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and therefore have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.
- (3) He must be leading a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of his cause to give up his life and his possessions.
- (4) He must be a habitual *khadi*-wearer and spinner. This is essential for India.
- (5) He must be a teetotaler and be free from the use of other intoxicants in order that his reason may be unclouded and his mind constant.
- (6) He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.
- (7) He should carry out the jail rules unless they are specially devised to hurt his self-respect. (p. 87)

With regards to the first stated qualification, it is vital to touch on Gandhi's (2001) broad and inclusive interpretation of what a "living faith in God" might entail. "Far be it from me to suggest that you should believe in the God that I believe in," he said, "but your belief...must be your ultimate mainstay" (p. 364). Gandhi's discourse on the subject makes clear that his fundamental belief that Truth itself was the best description of God meant that no one was summarily excluded from the fold of *satyagraha* due to dogmatic legalism. Anyone, according

to Gandhi, including atheists, could hold the inner commitment to Truth requisite for *satyagraha* (Mathai, 2000, p. 66).

Finally, Bondurant (1988) lists nine points that Gandhi identified as the appropriate marks of a *satyagrahi*'s conduct during a *satyagraha* campaign. Again, this list was meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

- (1) Harbor no anger but suffer the anger of the opponent. Refuse to return the assaults of the opponent.
- (2) Do not submit to any order given in anger, even though severe punishment is threatened for disobeying.
- (3) Refrain from insults and swearing.
- (4) Protect opponents from insult or attack, even at the risk of life.
- (5) Do not resist arrest nor the attachment of property, unless holding property as a trustee.
- (6) Refuse to surrender any property held in trust at the risk of life.
- (7) If taken prisoner, behave in an exemplary manner.
- (8) As a member of a *satyagraha* unit, obey the orders of *satyagraha* leaders, and resign from the unit in the event of serious disagreement.
- (9) Do not expect guarantees for maintenance of dependents. (pp. 39-40)

Two *Satyagraha* Campaigns

As for the issues that might catalyze the adoption of the *satyagraha* method, Erikson (1969) notes that such issues were consistently important in terms of the practical functioning of the community while also holding symbolic power in view of the community's overall future. That is, *satyagraha* sought to address issues that presented themselves in the form of day-to-day

injustices, and which simultaneously signified the larger, exploitative social structures that gave rise to them (p. 415). Over the span of Gandhi's leadership, *satyagraha* campaigns were launched in response to both internal conflicts between different subsets of Indians, and conflicts between Indian nationals and their British occupiers. The following two summaries, drawing from Bondurant's (1988) classic analysis, are suggestive of the nature and variety of Indian *satyagraha* campaigns.

The Vykom Temple Road *Satyagraha*

This campaign spanned 16 months, from the spring of 1924 to the fall of 1925. The immediate objective of the campaign was that untouchables gain the right to use roads which passed the Hindu temple in the village of Vykom. By prohibiting their passage along those roads, untouchables were forced to walk long, indirect routes to reach their homes. The struggle to reach the campaign's immediate objective represented a pivotal step toward the complete removal of untouchability, which was one of the foremost goals of the constructive program and the national movement toward *swaraj*. (pp. 46-52)

The primary opposing parties in the conflict were high caste Hindus, mostly Brahmans, who defended the practice of barring the passage of untouchables near the temple, and a combination of untouchables and caste Hindus, including some of high caste, who sought the stated reform. (pp. 46-47)

The *satyagraha* campaign included preliminary negotiation efforts and publicity to attract public attention and sympathy for the untouchables' cause. Prior to launching *satyagraha*, participants prepared for action through group prayer meetings and instruction in the principles of *satyagraha*. With the demands of the campaign well-known, nonviolent action proceeded in the form of organized processions along the prohibited road. Untouchable and caste Hindu

satyagrahis submitted themselves to physical beatings by Brahmins and were arrested by police, without resorting to retaliation. A second phase of action commenced when police established a barricade to block passage along the road. The *satyagrahis* stood vigil opposite the police barricade “day after day,” even during a monsoon, during which “*satyagrahis* continued to stand three-hour shifts, in some instances even up to shoulders in water” (p. 48-49). A third phase was marked by Gandhi’s visit in April 1925, when he “persuaded authorities to remove the barricade” (p. 49). After this the “*satyagrahis*, without losing equilibrium in action, continued their demonstration in efforts to persuade the Brahmins” (p. 52).

Through the persistent nonviolent witness of the *satyagrahis* the high caste Hindus were eventually persuaded to yield their opposition, and the immediate goal of the *satyagrahis* was attained in full. Longer-range goals were also achieved. The campaign had repercussions nationwide, leading to the opening of areas and temples previously closed to untouchables, and to an improvement in the general condition of untouchables overall. Bonduant concludes that “the campaign constituted a major turning point in the fight against untouchability.” (p. 49-50)

The Salt *Satyagraha*

The Salt *Satyagraha* campaign initiated a civil disobedience movement that lasted for a full year, from March 1930 to March 1931. Its immediate objective was the removal of the “Salt Acts” which undergirded the British government’s monopoly on salt. Gandhi chose the Salt Acts as the targeted iniquity of this campaign because of their basic injustice, primarily against the poor, and because “they symbolized an unpopular, unrepresentative, and alien government” (p. 89). “The ultimate objective” of this national movement “was complete independence” (p. 89).

The primary opposing parties in this conflict were the British government, as represented by state officials and their collaborators, including the police and army, and the Indian people, under the leadership of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. (pp. 89-90)

The *satyagraha* campaign was preceded by open announcements of Gandhi's plans and design for the campaign, by way of a Congress resolution and published articles in Gandhi's national journal, *Young India*. Gandhi sought negotiations with the British government in his famous "Letter to Lord Irwin," in which he issued a clear ultimatum that barring such arbitration the *satyagraha* campaign, with its contravention of the salt laws, would be undertaken. National preparations were made in the form of nonviolence training, the organization of a national leadership structure for the movement, the dissemination of a *Satyagraha* Pledge for would-be participants, and instructive articles penned by Gandhi in *Young India*, which included calls to strengthen the civil disobedience movement with the continuous work of the constructive program. (pp. 91-93)

The Salt *Satyagraha* was initiated with a 241-mile march from Gandhi's ashram in Ahmedabad to the seashore in Dandi. While clearly a bold political act, Gandhi (2001) insisted on the march's essentially spiritual nature, referring to it as a "sacred pilgrimage" (pp. 236-237). The core group of marchers, Gandhi along with 78 of his fellow ashramites, began the trek on March 12, 1930. The march was a form of preparation for civil disobedience as well as an opportunity to promote the movement and the work of the constructive program in villages along the way. The march also allowed for a building sense of anticipation and drama, which attracted the attention of the international media, which was represented by various journalists who traveled to cover the campaign. Gandhi initiated civil disobedience by lifting a fistful of salt on the beach at Dandi, on April 5. This signaled the rest of the country to commence mass civil

disobedience. The manufacture and open marketing of illegal salt was augmented by other forms of civil disobedience and non-cooperation, including tax resistance, open disobedience of ordinances designed to control publicity and public assembly, and the boycotting and picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops. (pp. 94, 96; York, *A Force More Powerful* [Documentary film])

To escalate the confrontation, in a second letter to the viceroy Gandhi announced plans to lead a nonviolent raid of the salt works at Dharsana. Gandhi's letter clearly enunciated that the government could prevent this next phase of struggle by repealing the salt tax. Gandhi was arrested, but the raid on the salt works went forward without him. Press reports covering the raid reached far and wide internationally, documenting in plain terms the naked brutality of the police in their faceoff with the nonviolent resisters. International public opinion reflected nearly universal sympathy with the Indian cause and disgust with British-enforced cruelty. (p. 92; York, *A Force More Powerful* [Documentary film])

After a year of nation wide civil disobedience activities and tens of thousands of arrests and jail sentences for Indian resisters, the British government released Gandhi from prison and invited him to talks. The movement reached its culmination in the signing of what became known as the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement on March 5, 1931. (p. 97)

In terms of the outcomes stipulated in the agreement, while the salt laws were not repealed, regulations were modified to allow for localized production and sales of salt by Indians, free of taxation. Amnesty was granted to convicted civil resisters, restraining ordinances were suspended, and discussion of constitutional reforms was deferred to the next Round Table Conference, at which the Indian National Congress would be represented (pp. 98-99). On the whole, many Indians were deeply disappointed by the lack of concrete gains from

their year of ardent struggle toward *swaraj*. But the wholesale repercussions of the Salt *Satyagraha* were nothing less than enormous in the context of the ongoing struggle. With hindsight, most historians agree that after the Salt *Satyagraha*, the proverbial writing was on the wall. Fischer (1950) explains:

India was now free. Technically, legally, nothing had changed. India was still a British colony... [But] Gandhi...made the British people aware that they were cruelly subjugating India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. After that, it was inevitable that Britain should some day refuse to rule India and that India should some day refuse to be ruled. (pp. 274-275)

Gandhian *Satyagraha* as Principled-Revolutionary Nonviolence

Burrowes (1996) identifies different approaches to nonviolent action through the use of criteria that defines whether a given campaign or approach is principled or pragmatic nonviolence on the one hand, and whether it is revolutionary or reformist nonviolence on the other. In the case of Gandhian *satyagraha* Burrowes concludes that it is a prime example of a principled-revolutionary approach to nonviolence. (pp. 100-101)

In terms of the distinction between pragmatic and principled nonviolence, Burrowes (1996) cites five characteristics, all applicable to *satyagraha*, that denotes the principled category: (1) it places a higher priority on ethics than on perceived effectiveness, (2) it views means and ends as indivisible rather than separate, (3) its fundamental view of conflict is that it is a shared problem rather than a case of incompatible interests, (4) its adherents accept suffering rather than inflicting it, and (5) its adherents are likely to practice nonviolence as a way of life rather than merely as a useful expedient under certain circumstances. (p. 100)

In terms of the distinction between reformist and revolutionary nonviolence, Burrowes (1996) cites four characteristics, again all applicable to *satyagraha*, which denote a revolutionary approach: (1) its analysis is focused on structural problems in addition to policy problems, (2) it aims for structural changes, rather than merely policy changes, (3) it is strengthened by a constructive program, and (4) its operational timeframe is long-term rather than short or medium-term. (p. 100)

Satyagraha's Reach

Thus far discussion of the sphere of political action has focused on *satyagraha* within the national context of Gandhi's India. Gandhi nevertheless insisted that the application of *satyagraha* could extend in both the micro and macro directions from there. Because voluntary self-suffering can reveal truths latent in conflicts both large and small, Erikson (1969) observes that Gandhi viewed "Satyagraha as a bridge between the ethics of family life and that of communities and nations" (p. 413). In light of his short temper, jealousy, and domineering manner in the early years of marriage, Gandhi himself credits his wife Kasturba as his first instructor in the art of *satyagraha*. Within the domestic realm, Gandhi claims that "her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity" (Arun Gandhi, 2000, p. 212).

Considering the other side of the equation, the global community, Nagler (2004) explains:

Gandhi knew perfectly well that a nonviolent construction of peace lay, as he put it, "in the womb of the future." It would fall to others to see this particular promise of nonviolence through to fruition; his job was to rebuild India, to midwife her out of the

British grip and, by so doing, expose the illegitimacy and fragility of colonialism—enough work for a single lifetime, even by Gandhian standards! There can be no doubt, however, that the “ocular demonstration” of Satyagraha’s power being staged in India was meant for the whole world. Gandhi stressed repeatedly that what may appear to be India’s problem—exploitation, greed, violence, race hatred—is the world’s problem. (p. 222)

And Gandhi would have certainly argued further that that which represented India’s solution, the two-sided embodiment of *swaraj*, which sadly was only partially realized in India, most definitely represents the world’s solution. That solution begins in the heart of the individual and extends outwardly from there, to the home, to the village, to the nation, to the world.

Closing Thoughts on Gandhi’s Threefold Approach: Gandhi as Transformative Leader

As previously quoted, James MacGregor Burns (2003) describes Gandhi’s conception of *swaraj* as the “transformation of both society and self” (p. 155), a combination which Burns and other leadership theorists associate with a style and quality of leadership which they deem transformative. Heifetz (1994) employs the term “adaptive work” (pp. 30-31) to describe what such leadership fosters. Adaptive work entails the effort to address and transform values or to bridge the gap between professed values and behavior. According to Heifetz a person exercising leadership encourages and facilitates people’s efforts to clarify their values, to build readiness to align those values with their behavior, and then to tackle the hard, ongoing work of doing so. The leader coordinates “the exposure and orchestration of conflict...for mobilizing people to learn new ways” (p. 22). Gandhi exposed and orchestrated such conflict in the public sphere, but also encouraged its continual exposure in the realm of the personal. A great many Indian people

“learned new ways” under Gandhi’s influence, both individually and collectively. Gandhi’s commitment to such learning was central to his life and work, and it points to the transformative essence of his leadership.

If there was one refrain or pivot point that was most essential to Gandhi’s exercise of leadership, it was the reclamation of personal dignity. As previously discussed, Gandhi insisted that the first order of business for a practitioner of active nonviolence was “that of non-cooperation with everything humiliating” (Merton, 1964, p. 29). This was because such non-cooperation protected one’s sense of honor and dignity. Gandhi then extended the same principle to the “other”. The nonviolence practitioner refuses not only to cooperate with anything humiliating to herself, but she likewise refuses to employ methods of “exploitation in any form” (Gandhi, 1972, p.83).

For Gandhi the notion of dignity was not a static endpoint; it was a starting place. The process of self-purification was a journey without end, in the direction of ever-deepening alignment with what Gandhi revered as Truth. Intrinsic to this journey was the act of stepping out into the social realm, where personal transformation would continue to deepen, while simultaneously engendering collective transformation. In this way, again, Gandhi’s nonviolent enterprise represents a powerful embodiment of transformative leadership.

One of the key outcomes of this leadership was a form of nonviolent discipline, action, and organizing which this study has viewed as a combination of personal transformation, constructive program, and political action. In one brief sentence describing *swaraj*, Mathai (2000) points to the underlying significance of the holistic approach that this three-fold description attempts to capture: “Although the word *swaraj* simply means self-rule, Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompassed all spheres of life” (p. 257).

By way of closing this section, let us return briefly to the example of the Salt *Satyagraha* in order to further elucidate the nature of this integral revolution. Within one campaign we see all three spheres of the Gandhian approach at play, a deft balancing act which undeniably lent the movement its great power. As previously noted, the great march to the sea was, according to Gandhi (2001), a spiritual pilgrimage, punctuated by the personally transformative spiritual practices and observances that characterized life at the ashram (pp. 236-237). The manufacture and distribution of salt was also a concrete example of constructive program—a reclamation of a forfeited indigenous industry and a means to building collective self-reliance. And, finally, the breach of the salt laws and other ancillary forms of civil disobedience were dramatic expressions of nonviolent resistance in the political realm. Rather elegantly the Salt *Satyagraha* manages to capture the essence of what this entire section has sought to illustrate. The constituent elements of the Gandhian pursuit of *swaraj*—personal transformation, constructive program, and political action—present a roadmap to an integral form of nonviolent revolution. Hopefully, this illustration of Gandhi's roadmap, as utilized by the Indian independence movement, has adequately set the stage for our consideration of another movement rooted in nonviolence, undertaken as it was on a similarly grand scale, though in a very different context.

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT THROUGH THE GANDHIAN LENS

While Martin Luther King Jr. frequently acknowledged the influence and inspiration of Gandhi and the Indian struggle in relation to the African-American Freedom Movement, he also acknowledged some key differences between the Indian situation and his own:

I would say we gained the operative technique for this movement from the great movement that took place in India. Now, of course there are 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... 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. (Mary King, 1999, p. 210)

Among others, the differences cited by King highlight the fact that consideration of the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of the three-fold Gandhian approach is characteristically interpretive work which does not constitute an exact science. As mentioned previously, the characterization of Gandhian nonviolence as a three-fold approach did not originate with Gandhi. That model has been projected back onto history by peace scholars (Sharp, 1979; Burrowes, 1996), carrying with it the advantages and disadvantages afforded by

the passage of time. This study now superimposes that model a second time, in relation to a different context altogether.

When looking through the Gandhian lens it becomes quickly apparent that the much more diverse and diffuse leadership of the African-American Freedom Movement did not practice the same level of didactic systemization characteristic of Gandhi. The African-American Freedom Movement's leadership, for example, did not articulate or disseminate a list of proposed projects along the lines of Gandhi's Constructive Programme. Nor were spiritual disciplines along the lines of Gandhi's vows and observances promoted to such a degree. This again points to the interpretive nature of this study, and also to its investigative character.

Before diving in it will be helpful to note a few additional attributes of this portion of the study. First, while by no means the only focus of this exploration, Martin Luther King Jr. draws a large amount of its attention. Given the great diversity of leaders and activists that carried the Freedom Struggle forward (Carson, 2001), this deserves a word of explanation.

Freedom Movement veteran Ruby Sales (unpublished interview, October 26, 2009) helps clarify the nature of King's leadership position, emphasizing the powerful dialectical relationship that developed between King and his manifold co-workers in the movement. What Sales describes as the ongoing "conversation" between King and his fellow freedom fighters took on a quality that distinguished King's leadership from that of any other leader during the civil rights era:

Dr. King's words, which came straight out of the black church, *met* the movement of the people... [H]e understood that in order to have a movement he had to speak in the language and the vernacular of the people... It was a language that had come up out of the struggle of African-Americans in this country for liberation. That language contained

all of our hopes, all of our aspirations, all of our suffering, all of our struggle... [T]hat's what made him great. Because, although he had gone to Boston University and he could use the academic language, and he could put forth exegetical texts and be a theologian, when it came down to it he rose up out of the mouths of the people. (R. Sales, unpublished interview, October 26, 2009)

From King's very first political speech, December 4, 1955, it is indeed evident that he was unusually gifted in giving voice to the collective thoughts and feelings of his people. His extraordinary ability to openly articulate the truest nature of their shared grief, anger, and hope, inspired the emergent movement to raise him up as its foremost spokesman. David Garrow (1999) depicts King as a leader who understood his role in that very light, recognizing that he was a necessary symbol for the people. In turn, King also became a symbol *of* his people and of the struggle that they were engaged in, a dynamic which arguably made him the movement's primary unifying force. A related defining mark of King's leadership, as explained by Carson (2005), was his remarkable "ability to express the broader significance of a freedom struggle that had many leaders" (p. 18). For these reasons this study places a great deal of trust in King's interpretation of the meaning and events of the struggle, despite the fact that no single individual could possibly represent it in full. In addition, with regards to Gandhian nonviolence, King was the only major leader who spoke in Gandhian terms, especially in the early years of the movement, and he penned the majority of published reflections on the Gandhian connection to the movement (V.G. Harding, personal communication, April 16, 2011).

Another clarifying word will be helpful before turning to our analysis of the Freedom Movement through the Gandhian lens. Just as the Gandhian approach has been defined, after the fact, by the threefold model utilized in this study, the African-American

Freedom Movement has been described by use of a two-part model. It is argued that the movement combines “the community mobilizing tradition, with large-scale events designed primarily for short-term support, and the community organizing tradition, with longer-range goals and less public drama” (Jensen & Hammerback, 2000, p. 1). The community mobilizing tradition, also referred to as mass mobilization, is closely associated with the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), while the community organizing tradition is closely associated with the young organizers of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Interestingly, when set aside the Gandhian model, the community organizing tradition largely signifies the realm of constructive program, while community mobilizing signifies political action. As with the characteristic features of the Gandhian approach, however, these aspects of the Freedom Struggle should not be misconstrued as mutually exclusive parts of a whole. In the course of the struggle the organizing and mobilizing traditions were deeply intertwined, each at different times embodying aspects most strongly associated with the other.

According to Carson (2001), the Freedom Movement’s key successes were achieved through the successful balancing of these two features, wherein the efforts, gains, and demands of local leadership, as nurtured and supported by community organizers, were projected on to the national stage through mass mobilization. Carson’s fundamental premise is that mass mobilization would have been greatly weakened without the stabilizing depth of local community organizing, just as local organizing would have suffered for lack of the national attention and pressure generated through mass mobilization. This calls to mind the previously mentioned balancing act exemplified by the Salt *Satyagraha*—a chapter of the Indian movement

which would have been drastically less successful had it lacked its rootedness in constructive program, or the nationwide reach of its various civil disobedience campaigns.

One final point is worthy of explanation before turning to the Freedom Movement through the Gandhian lens. This study has very deliberately employed the term Freedom Movement (and sometimes Freedom Struggle) rather than the more conventionally familiar “Civil Rights Movement.” The reasons for this are far from superficial. The term “Civil Rights Movement” does nothing to honor the historical stream that gave rise to it. Vincent Harding (2009) calls this phase of struggle for black Americans “the post-World War II stage of the Black freedom movement” (p. 1). Harding’s (1981) choice of words highlights his contention, shared with many others that the black struggle for freedom – of which the civil rights era represents a significant chapter – began when the first slaves bound for the United States were abducted in Africa. It is with recognition of that fact that this study employs the much more accurate and inclusive phrase “Freedom Movement.” The other related reason is that the phase of the Freedom Movement usually referred to as the Civil Rights Movement was not merely a struggle for civil rights. It was a period in an ongoing struggle which included but also transcended the singular hope of acquiring equal citizenship rights. In time the struggle subsumed many other concerns, including nothing less than war itself and the scourges of domestic and international poverty. Here again the phrase “Freedom Movement” does better to capture the inclusive nature of what was and what remains a constantly evolving struggle.

From here, this section seeks to illustrate that the African-American Freedom Movement performed its own nonviolence balancing act, and that the two-part model identifying community organizing and mass mobilization, which will be treated under the headings of constructive program and political action, is greatly enhanced by the added examination of the

realm of personal transformation. It is to that foundational aspect of the movement that we now turn.

Personal Transformation

As previously discussed, in Gandhi's conception the process of self-purification spans the spectrum of personal spiritual disciplines, constructive work in the community, and nonviolent political resistance. In like manner, personal transformation in the context of the African-American Freedom Movement represents an interconnectedness and dynamic interplay between the personal, the social, and the political. Therefore, while this study attempts to demarcate those three realms, it can only do so to a limited extent, as will be evident in this exploration of personal transformation.

Several topics and themes emerged upon close examination of the Freedom Struggle with particular attention to the ways in which participants of the movement experienced personal transformation, and the impacts that such transformation had on the character and development of the movement. These topics and themes include personal dignity, religious foundation, music, formation in nonviolence, and solidarity with the poor—each of which will be analyzed in this section.

Before turning to these, though, let us allow Martin Luther King Jr. to frame our discussion by illustrating what is arguably the definitive aspect of his philosophy—a philosophy that was largely normative for the African-American Freedom Movement. Like Gandhi, as King sought to help establish a just social order in his nation, he consistently worked to persuade others of the incontrovertible nature of means and ends. The means/ends formula lies at the heart of King's interpretation of and philosophical commitment to nonviolence:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate...Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that...The beauty of nonviolence is that in its own way and in its own time it seeks to break the chain reaction of evil. With a majestic sense of spiritual power, it seeks to elevate truth, beauty and goodness to the throne. (King, 1967, pp. 594-595)

Personal Dignity

As Baldwin (2010) explains, King's spirituality was significantly shaped by "the influence of the personalist conception of the dignity and worth of all human personality" (p. 31). Large (1991) expresses the point in similar fashion, noting that King believed that the human individual held an inestimable, inherent worth as "part of the givenness of creation" itself (p. 52). As with Gandhi, this conviction placed the individual center-stage in King's moral universe and helps to explain his insistence, again reflecting Gandhi, that the cause of freedom revolved around the acquisition of personal dignity.

Large (1991) argues that "the notion of dignity is where the social significance of Martin Luther King's nonviolent theory begins; it is the realization that social change, the vision of justice, lies within the transformation of character from an abject passivity to a sense of worth" (p. 54). In his speeches and sermons King frequently spoke of this in terms of "psychological freedom," stating for example that "with a spirit straining toward self-esteem, the Negro must boldly throw off the manacles of self-abnegation and say to himself and to the world, 'I am

somebody. I am a person. I am a man with dignity and honor" (Washington, 1986, p. 246).

Further, King linked this work of reclaiming a sense of esteemed personhood to the history of slavery and to black identity:

Yes, I was a slave through my foreparents, and now I'm not ashamed of that. I'm ashamed of the people who were so sinful to make me a slave. Yes, yes, we must stand up and say, "I'm black, but I'm black and beautiful." This self-affirmation is the black man's need, made compelling by the white man's crimes against him. (Washington, 1986, p. 246)

It is important to note that King and the movement for which he was primary spokesperson also called on white people to free themselves from their own form of mental slavery. King wrote that "a people who began a national life inspired by a vision of a society of brotherhood can redeem itself." But King recognized that such restoration entails responsibility, and therefore challenged whites with his conclusion that "redemption can come only through a humble acknowledgement of guilt and an honest knowledge of self" (King, 1968, p.88). The movement participation of white people from all corners of the United States, many of whom risked their lives, some of whom lost their lives, is a testament to their own willingness to answer this challenge with action on behalf of justice, and to be transformed in the process.

King takes Large's (1991) conclusion that his nonviolent theory begins with the transformation of character an important step further, powerfully asserting that the work of social change, particularly the on-the-ground work of nonviolent resistance, can engender major transformation in and of itself. In reviewing the accomplishments of the first decade of the Freedom Struggle, King (1968) draws the direct link between personal transformation and political action. That link is marked by the presence of dignity:

For more than a century of slavery and another century of segregation Negroes did not find mass unity nor could they mount mass actions. The American brand of servitude tore them apart and held them in paralyzed solitude. But in the last decade Negroes united and marched. And out of the new unity and action vast monuments of dignity were shaped, courage was forged and hope took concrete form... For the first time in his history the Negro did not have to use subterfuge as a defense, or solicit pity. His endurance was not employed for compromise with evil but to supply the strength to crush it... He came out of his struggle integrated only slightly in the external society but powerfully integrated within. This was the victory that had to precede all other gains.

(pp. 16-17)

Thus, historian Richard King (Albert & Hoffman, 1993) explains that political action during the Freedom Struggle represented “a kind of therapeutic exercise” leading to the self-transformation of those who undertook it (p. 139). He concludes that collective action made possible “the creation of a new self” (p. 140).

As with Gandhi, for Martin Luther King personal dignity was the hoped-for goal, not merely as an end in itself, but because it represented an essential starting place. This is because, as Large (1991) explains, the presence of moral character and dignity represents the ground for an individual’s ability to reject violence and embrace the way of nonviolence (p. 54). Just as nonviolent action effectuates dignity, dignity effectuates nonviolent action. This cycle is a key mark of King’s philosophy and of countless personal transformations that characterized the Freedom Movement.

King was far from alone in reaching the conclusion that the struggle for freedom largely hinged on the acquisition or reclamation of personal dignity. Charles Sherrod, a young SNCC

organizer, captures the same emphasis in describing his efforts to convey the basic meaning behind the movement. As Carson (1981) recounts, Sherrod and his co-worker Cordell Reagon walked black neighborhoods attempting to persuade the people that the key to the struggle was to free themselves inwardly, saying that “there were worse chains than jail and prison.” Their fundamental work, Sherrod maintains, was to encourage the people to break free of “the system that imprisons men’s minds and robs them of creativity...the system that teaches men to be good Negroes instead of good men” (p. 58).

The personal testimony of another SNCC organizer, Bob Moses, likewise indicates the central importance of dignity in relation to the movement. Before joining the struggle, Moses explains, he like so many other black people coped with the daily attacks waged against his personhood in the United States by repressing his natural responses. He says that his “whole reaction through life to such humiliation was to avoid it, keep it down, hold it in, play it cool.” It was only after becoming an active participant in the movement that Moses experienced a pivotal, irreversible “feeling of release” (Carson, 1981, p. 46). That inner sense of release, nothing less than the manifestation of freedom, bears the imprint of personal dignity restored, that characteristic which Gandhi maintained was the essence of *swaraj*. King and so many of his co-workers saw this self-same characteristic as both goal and launching pad for their nonviolent struggle.

Religious Foundation

Mary King (1999) situates the black church at the heart of the African-American Freedom Movement:

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...The tradition of black, Southern grassroots 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. (p. 99)

The “black communion of faith” was, therefore, a key instrument of personal transformation in the context of the Freedom Movement. As Mary King asserts, a shared vocabulary played an important role in this dynamic. Born of three centuries of religious fellowship, a vocabulary of Christian resistance to injustice joined the black church to the movement, and the movement to the black church.

Ruby Sales (unpublished interview, October 26, 2009) associates such vocabulary of Christian resistance with the black folk theology characteristic of the Southern church—the theology that she says Martin Luther King Jr. drew on to convey the nature of black people’s experience:

That theology...infused the words of King when he talked about “a bright and morning star,” “a lily in the valley,” “a shelter in a raging storm,” “a way out of no way,” “captain of the ship,”—all of those metaphors that said that black people didn’t give in to despair, because we recognized that while the empire thought it was the architect of creation, we knew that it was God that put breath in our bodies... Martin Luther King, and I, and other

people who had grown up infused in that spiritual structure—we understood the response to be, the theology to be, “I am somebody... I might be poor, I might be black, but I’m somebody.” “Poor little Jesus boy, they didn’t know it was you.” That was a theology of *somebodiness*, a theology of justice and righteousness... [A theology that] said that we were somebody in a society that said we were nobody. (R. Sales, unpublished interview, October 26, 2009)

Sales contends that this “theology of somebodiness” was an intrinsic part of the religious foundation that provided “the solid ground that [the Freedom Movement’s young activists] stood on to be courageous. It was in the community,” Sales explains, “in the movement...in everything that they had been taught about courage... and [in] every song that they had heard...” (R. Sales, unpublished interview, October 26, 2009)

The “theology of somebodiness” and “solid ground” that Sales describes, both denote the central importance of personal dignity, as previously discussed. This dignity-inspiring theology and solid spiritual ground explains why so many of the marches, vigils, nonviolence workshops, planning meetings, celebrations, and funerals of the movement were held in or sent forth from the sanctuaries of black churches (Branch, 1988). The church as staging ground for the movement highlights the centrality of black Christian spirituality in the struggle for freedom, and of its transformative impact on those who came into contact with it.

Foreshadowing our discussion of “formation in nonviolence,” it will be helpful to note that the theology of the black church instilled in many of its members the foundational ethic that would eventually come to be associated with the Gandhian approach. But it is vital to point out that this stream of thought and conviction was native to the Jesus tradition handed down through the centuries to Freedom Movement Christians like Martin Luther King Jr., Ruby Sales, and

countless others. Nevertheless, the word “nonviolence” was employed by the Freedom Movement, in large part thanks to King, as a way of naming “the love ethic of Jesus Christ in the social sphere” (Cornel West, 1993, p. 127). This love ethic, the basis for the nonviolence that King and other key leaders espoused and inculcated in the movement, was transmitted through the words, music, and fellowship of the black church.

Further consideration of the Freedom Movement’s religious foundation brings to light the many ecumenical and interfaith alliances that were forged during the struggle. Martin Luther King Jr.’s journey to a universalist spirituality provides an interesting window into the movement’s ecumenism. King broke with the general drift of his black church upbringing in a very significant way. During his first years of college studies King wrote that “the shackles of fundamentalism were removed from my body” (Branch, 1998, p. 62). King’s departure from a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity led him to view each of the world’s major faith traditions as a true path to the Divine. After returning from India in 1959, he illustrated this by leading his congregation at Dexter Avenue Baptist church in what was for a Baptist preacher a most unorthodox prayer. “O God, our gracious heavenly father,” he began. “We thank thee for the fact that you have defined men and women in all nations, in all cultures. We call you this name. Some call thee Allah, some call you Elohim. Some call you Jehovah, some call you Brahma. Some call you the Unmoved Mover” (Branch, 1998, p. 254). Here again King is aligned with Gandhi, as was previously discussed with regards to Gandhi’s professed vow of religious equality.

Harry Belafonte (unpublished interview, February 27, 2010), acclaimed entertainer and stalwart movement participant, highlights the King’s openness to differing religious perspectives,

as well as his critical awareness of the tendency of the church, as an institution, to fall short of its calling:

When I met Martin and we talked I soon had to let him know that my own spirituality had no allegiance to the church. As a matter of fact I did not like the church. I found it a huge hurdle for the human soul... And that I could not come to a place where my engagement [in the movement] from his perspective should be under any pretense or belief that I served the church or the church's interest. What surprised me was the fullness with which he appreciated that point of view, and he said most of the time, if not all of the time, he says, "I reside in the same place." And that just threw me for a loop. And I think nothing more illustrates the honesty and the purity of his thought on that subject as did his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," when he counseled the theologians on what he thought the church should be and what he saw that it was not. (unpublished interview, February 27, 2010)

King's openness to religious plurality was reflected in the wider movement—a movement which drew Protestants, Catholics, Quakers, Jews, agnostics, humanists, and people of other faith expressions into a shared community of struggle. Within that community of struggle the prophetic stream within this great diversity of faith traditions found resonance with the call to action communicated by King and his black co-workers. Such communion across lines of religious belief and practice was another transformational aspect of the Freedom Movement.

Before stepping away from this theme, a word on King's prayer life will serve to fill out the picture. King's nonviolent commitment was aided by a deep innate habit of reflection and an active prayer life. Baldwin (2010) contends that "King realized that the resources of mind, heart,

soul, and spirit came together as a necessary precondition for vibrant and successful ministry and mission. Prayer as he viewed it, was an essential ingredient in this equation" (p. 5). Despite its role as a critical means to and sign of personal transformation, this devotional commitment, which King inherited from the black church, is too often overlooked. And King, of course, is but one example of countless individuals whose work on behalf of freedom was grounded in the spiritual practice of prayer.

Music

On a very related note, the African-American Freedom Movement has been called "the greatest singing movement this country has experienced" (Carawan, 1990, p. 3). The "freedom songs" of the movement were born of the historical and religious heritage of black people in the South, drawing from spirituals sung by slaves, church hymns, and modern music. The singing activists of the Freedom Struggle crafted a repertoire that expressed the spiritual yearning and vitality of the ongoing movement, a repertoire which has been incorporated in freedom struggles the world over because of its power to capture and project the essence of oppressed people's longing for freedom and justice, as well as its power to fortify those engaged in collective struggle.

Marshall Frady (2002) captures the power of the music he encountered as a white journalist following the movement into the deep South:

One smouldering night in a little Alabama town, I found myself standing in the back of a shoebox tabernacle crammed with a congregation of black maids, janitors, beauticians, schoolteachers—all the windows open to the hot ripe night outside and cardboard fans advertising *Peoples Funeral Association* fluttering over the packed ranks of glistening faces—as a local preacher, a heavy, sweat-washed man just released from jail that

afternoon, led them through one of those mightily swooping hymns of the movement: *O freedom! O freedom! O freedom over me, over me...* I stepped outside to stand for a moment in the dark under a chinaberry tree, suddenly a bit woozy, and lighted a cigarette with trembling fingers. And with those voices in the church surging on in the night—*And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave, and go home to my Lord and be free*—I still distinctly remember the prickling that shivered over my hide, and blurting out, “Good God.” Such moments were a kind of Damascus Road experience in the lives of more reporters than me. (p. 3)

Frady’s testimony illustrates the undeniable power that music carried during the Freedom Movement—a power that ushered forth in church sanctuaries, in the streets, and in the jails, generating the courage and sense of solidarity that enabled people to take the risks and state the demands that the movement required.

While it would be easy to romanticize the degree and reach of the inner discipline of the freedom fighters who carried forth the struggle in the United States—it is of critical importance to recognize that the depth of the spiritual commitment of many nonviolent activists, a commitment which included the willingness to die for the cause, brought an unshakable quality to the movement. This unshakable quality, itself the embodiment of personal *swaraj*, lent an air of inevitability to the national struggle, a sense that it was only a matter of time before collective victory would be secured. This inevitable quality came through unmistakably in the freedom songs that formed the living soundtrack of the movement. Mass meetings culminating with the impassioned singing of “We Shall Overcome” frequently gave way to marches punctuated by the shouted call and response: “How long? Not long! How long? Not long!” These were the

sounds of a people grounded in a spirituality of impatient yearning—a yearning for justice both long overdue and on its way.

Carson (1981) recounts the statements of two freedom fighters, which captures the power of the movement's freedom songs and the experience of singing them in the context of a mass meeting:

As Bernice Reagon, one of the Albany student activists, recalled: "When I opened my mouth and began to sing, there was a force and power within myself I had never heard before. Somehow this music...released a kind of power and required a level of concentrated energy I did not know I had." Goldie Jackson, a black woman who had lost her job after allowing SNCC workers to stay in her house, remembered praying and singing in the church for the rest of the night: "Two things we knew held us together: prayer of something good to come and song that tells from the depth of the heart how we feel about our fellow man." (p. 59)

Formation in Nonviolence

Just as Martin Luther King Jr.'s religious bearing and outlook was reflective of an integral aspect of the movement that raised him up as a leader, so too did his gradual formation in nonviolence reflect, in a general way, that of the larger community of struggle.

While King had been exposed to Gandhi's theory of nonviolence before taking the mantle of leadership, it is apparent that his initial understanding of the approach was limited (Zepp & Smith, 1974; Branch, 1988; Garrow, 1999).¹ Bayard Rustin, a longtime and internationally recognized practitioner of nonviolence, met up with King in early 1956, during the initial stages of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Branch (1988) describes their introduction at

¹ Zepp & Smith, Garrow, and Branch present varied and contradictory descriptions of King's introduction to Gandhian thought and literature, leaving the reader with a rather hazy picture of King's cursory knowledge of the Gandhian approach at the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

some length. Rustin “told King that he had been all over the world and not seen a movement that could compare with what he had already seen in Montgomery” (p. 178). Rustin was deeply impressed with the “intuitive Gandhian method” (p. 178) employed by King and the other leaders in Montgomery, but he immediately identified their nonviolence as “unsophisticated” and encouraged advanced training (p. 179). Branch notes Rustin’s view that there were only four or five people, including himself, in the entire country qualified to offer such training (p. 179).²

One year later, Martin Luther King Jr. met James Lawson. Upon learning of Lawson’s deep understanding of the Gandhian approach, King immediately invited him to come South to help the movement. “We need you now,” said King. “We don’t have any Negro leadership in the South that understands nonviolence” (Branch, 1988, p. 205).

King’s understanding of nonviolence and his successful application of nonviolent methods grew gradually from an unrefined and somewhat haphazard beginning. This mirrors Gandhi, who developed and transformed—both personally and as a public organizer—in a gradual manner during his formative years in South Africa (1893-1915) (Nojeim, 2004, pp. 71-88). That said, King’s and the Freedom Struggle’s somewhat jumbled entry in the realm of nonviolent action—which Rustin called an “intuitive Gandhian method”—did not spring from a vacuum. As previously discussed, the fundamental choice for nonviolent witness and tactics employed by the movement came straight out of the tradition of the black church. It was not so much an “intuitive Gandhian method” as an intuitive and creative Christian response. While many participants in the movement were not motivated by or connected to Christianity in general or the black church specifically, the commitment to “get beyond enemy-thinking” (Branch, 1988, p. 672), King’s guiding image of a “beloved community” born of reconciliation and embodied

² It is unclear who Rustin may have thought to be so qualified, though Branch’s text would seem to indicate Glenn Smiley, Douglas Moore, and James Lawson as likely candidates.

brotherhood, and the willingness of many freedom fighters to face the possibilities of abuse, jail, and death, were to a large degree linked to the movement's grounding in a shared religious understanding and commitment. Arguably, these characteristics represent the most vital and difficult to inculcate in a nonviolent struggle, superceding strategic and tactical concerns in their importance.

King's consistent emphasis on loving one's enemy, which was central to his nonviolence philosophy, found outward expression in his personal willingness to move in the direction of those who taunted and threatened him (Branch, 1988, pp. 455-456). And his admonition to not return violence with violence, which he preached constantly throughout his years of leadership, found like expression in the following scene described by Branch, depicting King's reaction to being physically beaten by a self-proclaimed Nazi in 1962:

The assailant slowed rather than quickened the pace of his blows, expecting, as he said later, to be torn to pieces by the crowd. But he struck powerfully. After being knocked backward by one of the last blows, King turned to face him while dropping his hands. It was the look on his face that many would not forget. Septima Clark, who nursed many private complaints about the strutting ways of the SCLC preachers and would not have been shocked to see the unloosed rage of an exalted leader, marveled instead at King's transcendent calm. King dropped his hands "like a newborn baby," she said, and from then on she never doubted that his nonviolence was more than the heat of his oratory or the result of his slow calculation. It was the response of his quickest instincts. (p. 654)

Two other aspects of King's personal expression of nonviolence are worthy of note.

King was a master of synthesis in the decision-making process of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Garrow, 1999, pp. 464-465). This reflects a key element of

nonviolence, that of seeking truth from any and all corners, and blending them into working compromises. And, while King was no stranger to fear, even after his famous “kitchen epiphany” (Branch, 1988, p. 162), it would appear that he sought continually to work towards and instill in others a thirst for the fearlessness that Gandhi (1999a) saw as the mark of the true *satyagrahi* (p. 135).

While King’s formation in nonviolence is to an extent suggestive of the general course of the movement, the comparison has serious limits. The movement, after all, was comprised of an incredibly diverse community, and King’s experience is often contradicted by the experience of others. Bob Moses (unpublished interview, November 3, 2010), for example, paints a much different picture in terms of the role of nonviolence in the organizing he and his SNCC colleagues headed up in Mississippi during the 60s. Moses is plainspoken in his warning that SNCC workers’ understanding and practice of nonviolence should not be romanticized—that for most of them formation in nonviolence, particularly with regards to the philosophy’s spiritual basis, was extremely limited, if not entirely absent, during that period. In reference to Jim Lawson’s work as nonviolence instructor and mentor for the young activists who headed up the Nashville sit-in movement in 1960 (Branch, 1988, pp. 259-263) and later entered Mississippi by way of the Freedom Rides in 1961, Moses explains that the spiritually-based nonviolence that those activists brought with them did not take hold in Mississippi:

It didn’t penetrate Mississippi. In other words, none of us were thinking about what Lawson was talking about when we were doing our work... It was very important, but it didn’t reach through into Mississippi. In fact, it got shut down [there]... It was Diane [Nash] and the Nashville group, in that spirit, that took the movement energy into Mississippi with the freedom rides. And Mississippi said, “Well, the buck stops here.”

And it locked them up. So Mississippi invited them into itself, right? But then the question was, well, where do we go? Where does that energy go once it's here? What can it do? And...within a year they were all gone... The people who carried that particular energy in, they had all left. And what shut them down was simply that what you're talking about—the depth of the spiritual—it meant that you had to decide that you were actually going to confront Mississippi from the jail cell, for who knows how long.

(R.P. Moses, unpublished interview, November 3, 2010)

Moses explains that Mississippi workers used nonviolence by escorting potential voters to local registrars, “sustaining levels of violent reaction all the way up to murder,” without retaliating with violence. But he argues that the lack of “legal cover” for workers engaged in activities beyond such accompaniment represented a potential test for the spiritually-based nonviolence espoused by Jim Lawson and his trainees, but that, in the end, neither Lawson nor his trainees opted to undertake it:

I always thought the reason that form of nonviolence didn't take hold was because they were forced to think about the kind of jail cells...the jails, the sentences, that Mandela and people in South Africa went through—in other words, long-term jail sentences... The only way to sustain nonviolent direct action would have been if there was a spiritual engine that was going to help produce people who were ready to do long-term jail sentences. (R.P. Moses, unpublished interview, November 3, 2010)

Moses acknowledges Jim Lawson as such a “spiritual engine” in the case of the Nashville movement. But, he is quick to point out that he never saw another individual assume that role in the way that Lawson did. “Jim Lawson was only there for a very brief period, in a very specific context,” Moses asserts. “When the movement went down to Mississippi and had

to face murder, there was no Jim Lawson" (R.P. Moses, unpublished interview, November 3, 2010).

In the absence of a Jim Lawson presence, Moses explains that the nonviolence training and formation that Mississippi workers received was limited at best, and that whatever training they did receive focused almost exclusively on the application of nonviolent tactics, without due attention to the spiritual basis of the philosophy or its potential grounding and strengthening through disciplined spiritual practice.

So, for the most part, Moses and his colleagues were not thinking about the nonviolence of Lawson's conception when they were doing their organizing work. And, in addition to Lawson, Mississippi field workers also did not think about the wider movement's other most passionate advocate and spokesperson for principled, spiritually-based nonviolence—Martin Luther King Jr. "Being a part of the movement in Mississippi," Moses said, "King really didn't enter into our thoughts" (unpublished interview, November 3, 2010).

Nevertheless, despite the absence of a spiritual engine along the lines of Lawson or King, Moses' description of on-the-ground movement work in Mississippi depicts a deeply courageous group of young people practicing a mostly intuitive form of tactical nonviolence. One must surmise that the courage of these young people signifies a high degree of self-esteem and personal dignity, definitive marks of personal transformation within the struggle.

Solidarity with the Poor

The young activists of SNCC, more than most other participants in the Freedom Struggle, came to embody the principle of solidarity with the poor, which was another catalyst for and sign of personal transformation within the movement. Carson (1981) explains:

Association with SNCC meant not only a willingness to be arrested but also a desire to

identify with oppressed people, to abandon or postpone middle-class career plans, and to take the risk of assuming new tasks. These goals were symbolized in the SNCC workers' typical dress of blue jeans and work shirts or farmer's overalls. (pp. 71-72)

SNCC workers' solidarity with the oppressed people with whom they worked, as symbolized in their choice of dress, mirrors the solidarity aspect of the *khadi* campaign in India. In both contexts, the informal uniform of the movement, for at least some of its architects, was an expression of the very equality for which the struggle was being waged.

In late 1965, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's establishment of an ongoing program in Chicago was deeply rooted in a commitment to forge stronger solidarity with the urban poor of the United States. This impulse was lived out concretely by Martin Luther King Jr. in his decision, which was a great surprise to some, to secure an apartment for his family in the Chicago slum of Lawndale:

When "Brother Martin" took up residence, he was readily accepted. His Hamlin Avenue neighbors nicknamed him the Pied Piper—the phrase was more than just amusing to people who often stayed up all night to protect their slumbering infants from rats. (Miller, 1968, p. 235)

King's concrete action to share more closely in the daily lives of the poor of Lawndale lent an important measure of credibility to the social and political programs he championed. But it also represented, like the overalls worn by SNCC organizers in the South, a lived solidarity with the exploited and disenfranchised, which embodied the spirit of brotherhood and equality sought by movement. It was an expression of and conduit for King's own personal transformation.

King's final mass organizing effort, the Poor People's Campaign, sought to magnify this principle of solidarity with the poor on a massive scale. That campaign will be explored when we turn to the sphere of political action.

Constructive Program

Arguably, for the African-American Freedom Movement, the weakest link in the Gandhian chain was the concrete, ongoing work of a comprehensive, constructive social program. While many activities were undertaken to refashion the dysfunctional, racist society from the inside out, those activities were never systematized or collectively galvanized along the lines of the Gandhian program in India. That conclusion notwithstanding, several key constructive program-type initiatives are worthy of note, most of which are closely associated with the community organizing efforts of SNCC, though King's SCLC and other organizations also implemented several significant projects. Perhaps the two strongest areas of constructive program work during the Freedom Movement were education, both grassroots and institutionalized, and voter registration. These will be discussed below at some length, followed by a brief discussion of other initiatives, and a word on hierarchical leadership and the role of women during the movement.

Education

In terms of education, the historic black colleges played a fascinating and extremely significant role. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and a great many of the student activists who orchestrated the sit-in movement, the freedom rides, and the voter registration campaigns in the South, were nurtured, challenged, and to a great extent formed by the social and academic environments of their black colleges. Lowe (2007) describes one such environment, that of Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, as "an 'oasis of freedom' in a closed society...an

interracial ‘safe haven’ for those involved in and sympathetic to the civil rights movement who in turn, helped to cultivate networks, ideas, and strategies that contributed to the movement in meaningful ways” (p. 486). Favors (2008) explains that such safe havens were made possible through the efforts of “a formidable cadre of Black college faculty who sympathized with the rising tide of student activists and several who played a more direct role in assisting the movement” (p. 181). The historic black colleges, like the black church, represented one of a very few places where black people were able to be in community with each other with a large measure of autonomy. This educational and social context served to prepare a great many students, and some of their faculty, for deeply engaged participation in the Freedom Struggle and for deeply engaged citizenship in general.

The movement gave rise to another, much less formal stream of education, in the form of Citizenship Schools and Freedom Schools. These endeavors sought to educate and empower poor, rurally-based black men, women and children so that they could more fully struggle for and exercise their citizenship rights. These projects bore the hallmark characteristics of the work of a Gandhian constructive program as they were community-based, face-to-face efforts of social uplift and engagement. Septima Clark, head of SCLC’s Citizenship Education Program, is viewed as the primary force behind the Citizenship Schools that were held at the Highlander Folk School and community centers in a variety of locations throughout the South, including Dorchester, Georgia (Branch, 1988, pp. 263-264; p. 646). This grassroots program trained hundreds of blacks in such things as literacy, consumer education, planned parenthood, and civic participation.

SNCC organizer Charlie Cobb conceived the Freedom School concept in the fall of 1963. He described the purpose of the Freedom Schools as that of creating “an educational experience

for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives—ultimately new directions for action” (Rubin, 2010, p. 65). The curriculum of the Freedom Schools “included normal academic subjects, contemporary issues, cultural expression, and leadership development, [which included] the history of the black liberation movement and the study of political skills” (Carson, 1981). A total of 41 Freedom Schools were launched beginning in the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964. Located in a total of 20 Mississippi communities, typical enrollment at the schools ranged from 25 to 100 students (Rubin, 2010, p. 65).

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons (unpublished interview, October 10, 2010), a SNCC worker who helped establish Freedom Schools in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer campaign, laments that the program “should have been a national effort.” She argues that the black community and the nation would have greatly benefited both during and following the years of the civil rights era if this had been the case. She further contends that the movement’s achievement of significant gains in the realm of electoral politics led to a regrettable abandonment of the Freedom Schools and other locally-based grassroots initiatives:

Many of us thought that getting the vote and moving into electoral politics was going to be the solution to the problems. And we then dropped the grassroots organizing. That was a terrible mistake. Terrible... You elect people to office and...they get to Washington or their state capitols and they fall right in with what's going on there. They get caught up in the culture of those institutions and we have nothing back home that they know they have to remain accountable to. (G.Z. Simmons, unpublished interview, October 10, 2010)

The “terrible mistake” that Simmons points to, as represented in the movement’s desertion of the Freedom Schools, is illustrative of the delicate and essential balance between local, community-based organizing and national leadership. Simmons’ description of the excessive trust some black organizers and movement participants placed in electoral politics brings into focus the indispensable role of grassroots organizational structures, and the importance of maintaining connection with the people, places, and realities that can keep political leaders aware of the dictates of justice. Simmons’ description of the role of the grassroots underscores the importance and character of the constructive program as Gandhi conceived it. Such constructive social engagement not only serves to meet the day-to-day, on-the-ground needs of the people. It works as a kind of glue, binding the people to their representative political leadership and to the larger reality of the national movement.

Voter Registration

As early as 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. pointed to the second tier of the Gandhian approach, stating that “the constructive program ahead must include a campaign to get Negroes to register and vote” (p. 218). In time, the voter registration efforts carried out in various areas of the rural deep South, as exemplified especially by the work of Bob Moses and his SNCC colleagues (Branch, 1988, pp. 492-500), did become a key example of the constructive program aspect of the Freedom Movement. While the voter registration campaign was deeply political in nature, at its root was hands-on work of local empowerment characteristic of constructive program.

Larry Rubin (2010) provides a window into the on-the-ground reality, purpose, and risk of voter registration work:

Canvassing was hard, tiring work—walking red clay roads to visit the same people over and over again, saying the same things over and over again. The tedium was relieved only occasionally by being arrested and thrown in jail, or by being run off by white guys with guns or by being attacked and beaten... We were trying to win the trust of people and to help them nurture a sense of self empowerment as individuals and as an organized group... By even trying to register, people were risking losing their homes, their jobs, their crop shares. They could be beaten and killed. Their white bosses, landlords and plantation owners knew who was challenging the system and who was not, because the names of all those who were applying to register as voters were printed in the paper. (p. 55)

While federal law extended the right to vote to black citizens, racist terrorism and convoluted bureaucratic measures, such as lengthy and absurdly prohibitive registration literacy tests, kept the vast majority of blacks from seeking to exercise that right (see Moses & Cobb, 2001, pp. 46-47). SNCC voter registration workers went door-to-door in predominantly rural, black communities, to forge solidarity and to awaken the renewed sense of dignity that the vote came to embody. The door-to-door work was supplemented by classes geared to prepare potential voters for the registration process, as well as the type of grassroots citizenship-centered curriculum that came to characterize the Freedom Schools. SNCC workers and the men, women, and young people who risked associating with them or risked registering at the local courthouse were often harassed, threatened, and beaten. Several of them were murdered as a result of their courageous choice.

The southern voter registration campaign reached its culmination with the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964, known widely as Freedom Summer. Freedom Summer intensified

SNCC's voter registration efforts by orchestrating the influx of hundreds of mostly northern white student volunteers who came south to Mississippi to join the drive to register black voters. In its first week the project drew nationwide attention when three volunteers, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, were disappeared and presumed dead. The summer project continued unabated despite the terroristic backlash of segregationist whites. The bodies of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman were found six weeks after their disappearance. The witness of the three martyrs and the young men and women who continued together to carry forward that summer's work made a lasting contribution to the shift in national consciousness which led to profound legislative and cultural changes. (Carson, 1981, Chapter 9)

Additional Constructive Program Examples

Other constructive social projects that grew out of the movement included a community theater project called Free Southern Theater (Rubin, 2010, p. 69), farm cooperatives, business development initiatives, tutoring programs, credit unions, tenant union organizing, and an innovative project called Operation Breadbasket, which worked to steer black economic activity in the direction of businesses that offered employment to blacks in an equitable manner, and which drew economic activity away from those businesses that did not (King, 1967, May).

These examples notwithstanding, Taylor Branch (1988) appears sensitive to the movement's constructive program deficiency. While describing King's growing frustration with his role as a public speaker, Branch explains, for example, that most often the people in King's many audiences "listened wholeheartedly but did nothing," and that "King himself was surer of what they should think than what they should do" (p. 225).

Hierarchical Leadership and the Role of Women

Throughout the struggle this matter of *what people should do* represented a significant point of contention for movement leadership. Ella Baker, key community organizer with SCLC and mentor to many of SNCC's young workers, was clearly alienated from SCLC's male-centered leadership circle because of her gender and her divergent tactical views. Baker maintained that the dramatic rallies and marches which the male leadership relished in should be viewed as supports to on-the-ground projects, such as voter registration and Citizenship Schools, rather than as ends in themselves (Branch, 1988, pp. 232-233). This insight was key, that concrete work—slow-moving as it may be—should be prioritized above and beyond emotional public events. Equally valuable to this insight was Baker's alternative vision of a more egalitarian leadership and decision-making structure (Traci West, 2008, p. 56). Along with Baker, James Lawson and the young organizers of SNCC openly questioned the hierarchical character of the movement's leadership, and modeled a more inclusive leadership structure within the projects they helped to build and lead (Branch, 1988, p. 292; pp. 300-301).

In her article “Gendered Legacies of Martin Luther King Jr.’s Leadership,” Traci C. West (2008) contextualizes King’s role within a black preacher culture and hierarchical structure that served to shield movement leaders from ethical accountability, and which devalued and alienated the viewpoints of women. West argues specifically that Ella Baker was one of many victims of the systematic misogyny that characterized the male preacher culture of the movement’s leadership circle (pp. 54-55). One can only speculate that the movement suffered a great cost because of this shadow side of its religious foundation in the black church of that time.

In spite of this shortcoming, the African-American Freedom Movement benefitted inestimably from the participation and powerful leadership of Baker and many, many other

women, such as Septima Clark, Diane Nash, Annie Devine, Victoria Gray Adams, and Fannie Lou Hamer. It is interesting to consider what may have happened if “the uplift of women” had been a stated component of the movement’s nonviolent agenda, as had been the case in the Gandhi-led struggle in India.

Political Action

Miller (1968) captures Martin Luther King Jr.’s core motivation and accomplishment in the realm of political action, which characterized the movement for which he was chief spokesman and symbol:

At the outset of Martin Luther King’s twelve-year career, white America possessed many illusions about itself which it was the task of King and those he led to puncture and deflate. Ultimately, by asserting his dream of brotherhood in the face of its dramatic and persistent denial, Martin King did more than any other American to expose the fraudulence of white America’s boast that this was a land of freedom and equality. (p. 281)

It was through the use of nonviolent strategies in the caustic socio-political context of the Jim Crow era that Martin Luther King Jr. and his co-workers managed to so expose white America’s “fraudulence” and usher in a host of legislative and cultural shifts previously unimaginable to a great many Americans. This section explores the multidimensional political action component of the African-American Freedom Movement in a kaleidoscopic fashion. It begins with discussion of the philosophical basis and basic characteristics of the nonviolent strategies characteristic of the Freedom Movement, utilizing Martin Luther King Jr.’s interpretation of Gandhian *satyagraha*, a description of the definitive nonviolent process termed “double conversion”, and a brief rendering of the nonviolent pledge and steps of nonviolent

conflict characteristic of the Kingian approach. The section continues with descriptions of King's transformative leadership and the Freedom Movement's unique expression of *swadeshi* within the U.S. context. The movement's progressive shift in focus from nonviolent reform to nonviolent revolution follows, with illustrations of King's opposition to the Vietnam War and his advocacy for the Poor People's Campaign. The section closes with consideration of the global reach of King's nonviolent vision.

Satyagraha Translated for the U.S. Context

While the Freedom Movement experienced a great many seasons in its collective relationship to nonviolence, Martin Luther King Jr.'s interpretation of and consistent call for adherence to the Gandhian principles of nonviolent action were undeniably normative for the movement as a whole, and had a deeply significant impact on the future of the nation. As noted in Chapter 2, King (1958) distilled the essence of Gandhian *satyagraha* by describing six core characteristics. He did not cite *satyagraha* within his explanation, but used rather the conventional phrase "nonviolent resistance" as his heading. The six characteristics of nonviolent resistance that King detailed are as follows: Nonviolent resistance: (1) is active, not passive, (2) seeks reconciliation, not victory over, (3) fights injustice rather than persons behaving unjustly, (4) requires the willingness to suffer without retaliating, (5) rejects physical and spiritual violence (hate, ill will, humiliation, etc.), and (6) flows from and is strengthened by the spiritual conviction that the universe itself is on the side of justice and truth, that "the believer in nonviolence...knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship" and, therefore, "[he] has deep faith in the future" (pp. 90-95).

“Double Conversion”

In order to better understand how King and his Freedom Movement co-workers accomplished what they did, it will be helpful to consider Erikson’s (1969) discussion of the process of “double conversion” (pp. 437-438). While Erikson presents the concept vis-à-vis Gandhi’s approach to nonviolent conflict, “double conversion” was foundational for the Freedom Movement’s nonviolent mode of action. In the following description, Erikson lays particular emphasis on the conversion of the would-be nonviolent activist:

Gandhi’s way...is that of a double conversion: ...by containing his egotistic hate and by learning to love the opponent as human, [the *satyagrahi*] will confront the opponent with an enveloping technique that will force, or rather permit, him to regain his latent capacity to trust and to love. In all these varieties of confrontation, the emphasis is not so much (or not entirely) on the power to be gained as on the cure of an unbearable inner condition. (pp. 437-38)

The “unbearable inner condition” that Erikson refers to is nothing less than that most common of human maladies, the disunity between one’s behavior and one’s most normative core values. In his treatment of Erikson’s concept of double conversion, Philip Hefner (2004) offers a helpful interpretation, laying his emphasis on the conversion of the opponent engaged by the nonviolent activist:

[While] the confronting nonviolent activist is converted to a desire to elicit the best from the one who is confronted...[the] confronted person is converted to respond in ways that express his or her own best self. Both Gandhi and King said that they aimed at promoting a consciousness in their opponents that would enable those opponents to say

after the confrontation, 'I did what was right and good.' The opponent was to be left with integrity intact. (p. 266)

Whether at a lunch counter sit-in, at the voter registration desk at city hall, in the choking tear-gassed chaos of a march disrupted by police, or in negotiations in the oval office of the White House, the practitioner of nonviolence during the Freedom Movement sought to initiate and participate in this process of mutual awakening. It was a process that began with oneself and then, to borrow from Erikson's (1969) language, sought to "envelope" the opponent (p. 437).

The ground for such nonviolent action, according to Martin Luther King Jr., was love—a selfless love which finds its full transformational footing when it is extended to the enemy. For King this represented an absolutely critical link. Gary Simpson (2008) concludes that King's philosophy hinges on such love because it "changes the face of three enemies: the face of the oppressed, the face of the oppressor, and the face of the oppressive system" (p. 60). In keeping with our previous discussion of personal transformation, the process begins, Simpson argues, "by chang[ing] the face of the first enemy, the enemy within" (p. 61). But overcoming one's own hatred of the oppressor is only the beginning. Changing the face of the remaining two enemies adds the additional planks needed to construct what King saw as the ultimate goal of the movement, the establishment of what he consistently referred to as the "beloved community." To King, in its essence, the movement was about the healing of broken community. One can only "close the gap in broken community," he said, "by meeting hate with love" (Hefner, 2004, p. 272).

Nonviolence Pledge and Stages of Nonviolent Conflict

The following nonviolence pledge represents a fascinating counterpoint to the previously mentioned qualifications for *satyagrahis*, as put forth by Gandhi in 1939. This pledge, signed by

participants in the 1963 movement in Birmingham, reflects the mutually reinforcing goals of “double conversion” and “beloved community,” and thereby illustrates the Christian-centered, yet intrinsically Gandhian commitment that served as a cornerstone for the Freedom Movement:

I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF—MY PERSON AND BODY—TO THE NONVIOLENT MOVEMENT. THEREFORE I WILL KEEP THE FOLLOWING TEN COMMANDMENTS: 1. MEDITATE daily on the teachings of Jesus. 2. REMEMBER always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation—not victory. 3. WALK and TALK in the manner of love, for God is love. 4. PRAY daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free. 5. SACRIFICE personal wishes that all might be free. 6. OBSERVE with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy. 7. SEEK to perform regular service for others and for the world. 8. REFRAIN from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart. 9. STRIVE to be in good spiritual and bodily health. 10. FOLLOW the directions of the movement and of the captain of the demonstration. (Deats, 2003, p. 69)

Likewise, reflecting the previous discussion of the steps which characterized Gandhi-led *satyagraha* campaigns, based on various nonviolent campaigns of the civil rights era the King Center summarizes the Kingian approach to conflict with an extremely similar six-step schemata:

1. Information gathering and research to get the facts straight
2. Education of adversaries and the public about the facts of the dispute
3. Personal commitment to nonviolent attitudes and action
4. Negotiation with adversary in a spirit of goodwill to correct injustice
5. Nonviolent direct action, such as marches, boycotts, mass demonstrations, picketing, sit-ins, etc., to help persuade or compel adversary to work toward dispute-resolution

6. Reconciliation of adversaries in a win-win outcome in establishing a sense of community (“The Six Steps of Nonviolence,” (n.d.))

King’s Transformative Leadership

At pivotal moments during the Freedom Struggle, King and his colleagues used the political realm as a staging ground for campaigns that led to the collective transformation of millions of people, helping enact the “transformation of both society and self” (Burns, 2003, p. 155) that is the mark of Gandhian *swaraj* and of transformative leadership.

In his analysis of King’s leadership of various direct action campaigns, Heifetz (1994) illustrates two key factors in King’s approach. The first was his ability to draw attention to himself and then deflect it to the issues at hand (pp. 225-226). King’s and the movement’s orchestration of events that appealed to television and other news media audiences was a critical aspect of this process. The second key factor was King’s ability to modulate conflict to its optimal level, where participants and bystanders could engage in transformative learning without being pushed beyond their capacities. When King “produced the spectacle of the police beating...marchers for the watching eyes of national television,” Heifetz explains, he “gave adaptive work [i.e. the work of clarifying values and aligning them with behavior] back to the society” (p. 227). Just as a teacher might introduce and orchestrate a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1990, pp. 13-14) in a classroom, in the form of a provocative film, poem, or debate, King did likewise on a national scale, through the use of strategically designed, morally grounded, nonviolent direct action.

Cynical commentators might try to portray the marching blacks as the witless puppets of the manipulative King. But such a contortion of facts would not explain away the television images of state troopers and policemen beating defenseless people who asked

for the right to vote. By dramatizing forcefully the contradictions within the nation, King made people feel the contradictions in their own attitudes. In this way he deflected attention away from himself to the issues and spread responsibility for working them through. (Heifetz, 1994, p. 227)

It is this process of the people working the issues through that Heifetz (1994) points to as the surest sign of effective leadership—that is, leadership that can bring about abiding transformation not only for a few individuals but for entire communities, including, potentially, the national community. In exercising this type of leadership, Martin Luther King Jr. advanced the two-fold transformation of *swaraj*. And, as with Gandhi, the tool he employed was the tool specifically designed for that purpose: nonviolent action.

***Swadeshi* in the U.S. Context**

Another key point, worth repeating, is that the Freedom Movement's forays in the realm of political action were characterized by the delicate work of balancing local community organizing and mass mobilization. The Freedom Movement's most successful campaigns reached the national spotlight through mass mobilization, but were always grounded by local leadership and local initiative (Carson, 2001). While thousands of supporters were drawn from afar into many of the movement's powerful campaigns, such as those in Birmingham and Selma, those campaigns always sought concrete changes at the local level. The precedent for this was indelibly established by the movement's inaugural campaign, the Montgomery bus boycott.

This dynamic recalls the foundational Gandhian commitment to *swadeshi*, as previously explored. James Lawson, nonviolence trainer for the student-leaders who carried forward the Nashville sit-in movement, highlights its importance:

Gandhi *insisted*, and I completely agree, that nonviolence has to be rooted in the local scene—in reshaping people and the environment in which the people live... Nonviolent theory is that you root the work in your own environment and place, with your own people and time. And that if you work diligently there, other people in other places will find sympathy with this because their environment is the same. (J. Lawson, unpublished interview, November 23, 2009)

From Reformist-Principled to Revolutionary-Principled Nonviolence

Recalling Burrowes' (1996) matrix identifying nonviolent action as being a combination of principled or pragmatic nonviolence, and revolutionary or reformist nonviolence, we will now turn to specific campaigns of the Freedom Movement to illustrate its shift from a reformist-principled approach to a revolutionary-principled approach. While the distinction is by no means watertight it is illustrative of an important development over the course of the movement.

Following the Montgomery bus boycott, the movement's inaugural and successful campaign to desegregate Montgomery's public bus system, Mary King (1999) identifies the sit-in movement and the freedom rides as deeply significant developments in the early stages of the movement. "The sit-ins gave the nonviolent movement its mass base and regional reach" (p. 135) she argues. "The death knell for segregation statutes was sounded by the sit-ins," she adds, "[and] the 'freedom rides' were its dirge" (p. 139). These examples, the Montgomery bus boycott, the sit-ins, and the freedom rides, established the most definitive methods employed by the Freedom Movement during the civil rights era. In Montgomery, the boycott method was used for over a year in order to attain the campaign's stated goals. The sit-ins employed the tactic of civil disobedience—that is, transparent defiance of laws that are viewed as immoral or illegitimate. And, in the case of the freedom rides, what Jim Corbett (Ufford-Chase, 2005) terms

“civil initiative” was employed, wherein activists *obeyed* laws as a mode of defiance, because those laws, while perceived as moral and legitimate, were not being obeyed and/or enforced by the general populous and powers-that-be.

Each of these campaigns was rooted in principled nonviolence and each sought significant policy reforms or enforcement. According to Burrowes’ (1996) criteria, because these campaigns were more focused on policy changes, in relation to the legal structures upholding segregation in the South, than on more deep-rooted structural changes, they represent examples of reformist-principled nonviolence as opposed to revolutionary-principled nonviolence. Arguably the same is the case for the other major direct action campaigns of the movement, such as those waged in Birmingham and Selma, as well as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party’s challenge to be seated at the Democratic convention in 1964. Each of these campaigns, while calling for radical systemic shifts, with regards to public accommodations, voting rights, and representation in the national Democratic Party, for example, called for those shifts within the existing system, without demanding a more comprehensive and fundamental transformation or dismantling of that system.

It was not until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, two of the most sweeping and highly regarded legislative outcomes of the Freedom Movement, that the limitations of such political victories began to settle in for many in the movement. From 1965 forward, Martin Luther King Jr.’s words express with increasing urgency the fact that the most deeply rooted issues of racism, militarism, and poverty remained largely untouched by the gains of the movement up until that point. His address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967 underscores the point:

It is necessary for us to realize that we have moved from the era of civil rights to

the era of human rights... For the last 12 years we have been in a reform movement...

[But] after Selma and the voting rights bill, we moved into a new era, which must be an era of revolution. We must see the great distinction between a reform movement and a revolutionary movement. We are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. (Alexander, 2010, p. 246)

Also in 1967, King similarly confided to a reporter that he personally had made the shift from a reformist perspective to a revolutionary perspective. “For years,” he said, “I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you’ve got to have a reconstruction of the entire society” (Smith, 1989, p. 273).

During the period of 1965 to 1968, which is generally regarded as a phase of dramatic radicalization in Martin Luther King Jr.’s thought and leadership, Smith (1989) argues that King’s increasingly incisive analysis of racism in the United States, set alongside national economic and military policy, paved the way for King’s bold calls for a negotiated peace in Vietnam, and for a Poor People’s Campaign—a massive nonviolent mobilization in Washington D.C. demanding sweeping anti-poverty legislation. These two developments represented a crucial shift not only for King, but for the movement that continued to raise him up as leader and spokesman. These developments represented a gradual shift from reformist-principled nonviolence to revolutionary-principled nonviolence.

Vietnam

Branch (2006) dates King’s first public comment about Vietnam to a speech delivered at Howard University on March 2, 1965. While admitting sympathy for President Lyndon Johnson in the midst of a precarious political dilemma, King declared that “the war in Vietnam is

accomplishing nothing" (p. 23). This combination of acknowledging the President's plight while asserting his own dissent would characterize the majority of King's initial statements on Vietnam.

By April 4, 1967, however, when King delivered his most famous statement on the war at New York's Riverside Church, he brooked little sympathy for the U.S. commander-in-chief. By the time of that address, which is known by two names, "Beyond Vietnam" and "A Time to Break Silence," King's persistent condemnation of military action in Vietnam had driven a permanent wedge between him and the President, as it had likewise led to significant division within the Freedom Movement. In fact, in August 1965, the Board of Directors of King's own Southern Christian Leadership Conference made it clear that King made his pronouncements on Vietnam as an individual clergyman, not as the organization's representative (Garrow, 1986, p. 438). In speaking out on Vietnam, King alienated himself from his own organizational base while placing himself in solidarity with the young organizers of SNCC, who had often been King's most outspoken critics, spurring him to a more radical posture. In harmonizing his rhetoric with theirs, King joined SNCC's charge to link racial injustice at home to imperial aggression abroad (Simmons, 2008, p. 200). This linkage of the civil rights movement and the peace movement was a caustically controversial choice for King, but one that he insisted was made inescapable by religious imperative (Harding, 2008, pp. 13-14).

Branch's (2006) analysis of King's "Beyond Vietnam" highlights two of King's stated reasons for voicing his dissent—reasons which King deliberately linked to the Freedom Struggle:

King undertook to explain "why I believe the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church [where King held his first post as a minister, a post which coincided with the

Montgomery bus boycott]...leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.” Vietnam had “broken and eviscerated” the historic momentum for justice since the bus boycott, he asserted. Moreover, circumstance compelled poor black soldiers to kill and die at nearly twice their proportion for a stated purpose to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia that remained myths at home, fighting in “brutal solidarity” with white soldiers “for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools.” (p. 591)

In addition to the grossly disproportionate suffering and death of U.S. blacks fighting to “guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia that remained myths at home” (Branch, 2006, p. 591), King’s anti-war stance was rooted in his unwavering commitment to nonviolence (p. 592), in his compassion for the suffering Vietnamese (Simmons, 2008, p. 202), and in his view that the war in Vietnam was stealing the hopes of the poor in the United States (Washington, 1986, pp. 232-233). Jackson (2007) captures a fifth pillar undergirding King’s opposition, saying that “at his most radical, [King] denounced the war as [an] expression of America’s global drive for military and economic hegemony, the ultimate purpose of which was to protect foreign markets for American corporate interests” (p. 309). This view certainly informed King’s opinion that U.S. involvement in Vietnam, as in other international conflicts, showed that the U.S. was “on the wrong side of a world revolution” (Washington, 1986, p. 240), through which oppressed peoples across the globe were struggling for self-determination.

Taken together, these facets of King’s position on Vietnam not only serve to illustrate the basis for his strident dissent against the war. They also go a long way to explain his broader call for a shift in the U.S.-based struggle for justice and equality—that is, the shift from reform to revolution.

The Poor People's Campaign

King's anti-war advocacy and analysis found its domestic equivalent in his call, made public in the fall of 1967, for the mobilization he christened the Poor People's Campaign. As Harding (1983) put it, "Having attacked the nation's anti-liberationist actions overseas, [King] now intended to move on the heart of the Government, demanding a response to the suffering of its own semicolonized peoples" (p. 17).

King's plan was to launch a nonviolent campaign in the spring of 1968 that would bear the hallmark influence of the Gandhian recipe, "envisioning the massive dimensions, the disciplined planning, and the intense commitment of a sustained, direct-action movement of civil disobedience on the national scale" (Washington, 1986, p. 650). His plan was to identify and train a core group of 3,000 poor Americans representing ten different urban and rural areas. This multi-racial "nonviolent army, this 'freedom church' of the poor" (p. 651), would descend on the national capitol to lobby the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government with "a twelve billion dollar 'Economic Bill of Rights' that would guarantee employment to all able-bodied and viable incomes to those unable to work or to find jobs" (Simmons, 2008, p. 207). These nonviolent activists would be prepared to answer the expected delays and empty promises of their legislators with the resolve to remain camped-out on the Washington D.C. Mall until such sweeping anti-poverty legislation was officially enacted. Reflecting his and the movement's commitment to living out solidarity with the poor, King called on other U.S. citizens "from all groups in the country's life" to join the core nonviolent army in a supportive role, "deciding to be poor for a time along with the dispossessed" (p. 651).

As Harding (2008) notes, King saw the Washington D.C. mobilization as an initial phase, "the opening of a nationwide movement of 'massive civil disobedience' on behalf of radical,

humanizing change in America" (p.71). Harding remarks that King advocated for such revolutionary measures "vaguely and courageously" (p. 70). King's death in April 1968, just weeks before the Poor People's Campaign was scheduled to begin, cut short his opportunity to hone and further articulate his emerging vision for nationwide nonviolent action. The campaign, which proceeded in the aftermath of King's assassination, was at best a mixed success. According to Thomas Jackson (2007), the Poor People's Campaign amounted to "a month and a half of sporadic demonstrations [that] led to protracted, inconsequential negotiations with heads of executive agencies rather than a climactic confrontation capable of riveting the nation" (pp. 354-355). There is no way of knowing how the campaign would have fared if the movement's primary spokesman and symbol had been there to lead its charge.

The Reach of King's Nonviolent Vision

King not only saw the Poor People's Campaign as a close relative of the peace movement's demands for an end to the war in Vietnam. He saw it as a step the United States must take in order "to get on the right side of the world revolution" (Washington, 1986, p. 639)—a revolution determined to undo the gross worldwide disparity between poverty and wealth. King saw the Poor People's Campaign in this global context and insisted that it be rooted in nonviolence. In that way, the poor of the United States could model nonviolent action for the world community, as Gandhi's followers had in India.

Gwendolyn Simmons (2008) summarizes the global reach of King's ripening vision, as follows:

[King] felt that the next stage of the movement was to become an international one. He was thinking of a Western-financed Marshall Plan for the developing world, to break the chains of poverty. He envisioned an international nonviolent movement stretching across

the globe in the developed and developing world... Dr. King was far ahead of even his closest colleagues (and of his young radical interlocutors); he was a visionary and a citizen of the world... He understood the interlocking nature of the problems faced by the world's poor. He understood how these festering problems led to war and as we now know, to "terrorism." Dr. King wanted to *planetize* our movement for social justice. (pp. 206-207)

Closing Thoughts on the Freedom Struggle Through the Gandhian Lens

The realms of personal transformation, constructive program, and political action were clearly each and all instrumental aspects of the African-American Freedom Movement, and over time the movement became increasingly reflective of the tenor of Gandhi's conception of integral nonviolent revolution.

The active nonviolence of the men, women, and children who carried forward the African-American Freedom Movement, whether exercised within the realm of the personal, the social, or the political—or more likely in some combination of the three—hinged on the same fundamental aspiration that represented the beginning point of Gandhi's movement—that is, the realization of human dignity. It follows, and is fitting to restate, that the Freedom Movement was not merely a struggle for civil rights. "Civil rights" represents a reductive political and legalistic description of a movement which, in its essence, was a religious struggle for unadulterated personhood and the fundamental human rights that are the mark of dignified humanity—a struggle that represented and reached people who were molding a reborn nation out of their shared moral claim on justice. For this reason, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference transcended the label of civil rights by describing the unfolding movement as a struggle "to redeem the soul of America" (Garrow, 2004, p. 286). As King and

his many co-workers engaged in their chapter of that continuous struggle, nonviolence, in its comprehensive Gandhian form, was arguably the greatest force at their command.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

James Lawson (unpublished interview, November 23, 2009) contends that the most essential work of nonviolence is that of critically assessing the current scene and addressing existing systemic injustices through strategic, protracted nonviolent struggle. He believes that ignorance about nonviolence is one of the most powerful impediments to such action being effectively undertaken in the United States today:

So much of what is being called nonviolence in the United States is the old-line pacifism without the study of Gandhi or the movement of the United States, the King Movement... The Civil Rights Movement from the perspective of King, and from the perspective of those of us who did the work, is not studied. I have seen any number of books on nonviolence in which the King Movement is a one-liner, in which folk like Martin King, or Rosa Parks, or Bernard Lafayette, or John Lewis, or Diane Nash, or CT Vivian, or Metz Rollins, or many of the folk who really took nonviolence out of their Christian roots and applied it, are not even mentioned. This, to me, is incredible. (J. Lawson, unpublished interview, November 23, 2009)

With an air of exasperation, Lawson chides contemporary activists, saying that “the so called enlightened people of the United States who want change and social action...do not take seriously either the Gandhian nonviolence understanding or the King nonviolence understanding” (J. Lawson, unpublished interview, November 23, 2009).

This study represents my limited but earnest effort to take “the Gandhian nonviolence understanding” and “the King nonviolence understanding” seriously. As I stated in the introduction, I have undertaken this effort with the hope that it may be joined with the efforts of

others to help clarify how Gandhi's holistic, comprehensive approach to nonviolence can be effectively translated and implemented in our present day context.

But James Lawson's conclusions about the ignorance of "the so-called enlightened people" rings painfully true. In the present day American scene an extremely small number of people are aware, for example, that in 1967 and 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. worked to raise up a "nonviolent army" that would initiate a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience on behalf of America's poor. Fewer still are aware that King pictured this national mobilization as part of an emerging international nonviolent movement that would bridge the grievous chasm between the rich and poor of the world. Similarly, an extremely small number of people—even people deeply involved in peace, human rights, or other social change work—are aware that Gandhi crafted such a thing as "Constructive Programme," let alone that he prioritized it far above overtly political efforts.

Each of the authors I have cited in this study has gone to great lengths to fill out the prevailing, partial images of Gandhi and King, and of the movements of which they were a part. Thousands upon thousands of pages have been devoted to this work of clarifying and restoring the historical record, so that the revolutionary nature of Gandhi's and King's analyses and the breadth of their legacies might be more fully understood and embraced. Yet, for all of those pages, the conceptual framework of Gandhi's integrated approach to nonviolence, and the African-American Freedom Movement's sometimes deliberate, sometimes intuitive rendering of it, remain vaguely understood and rarely if ever translated into purposeful, concerted practice.

The "balancing act" accomplished in the India of Gandhi's time and the United States of King's time, of the three elements of personal transformation, constructive program, and political action, represents an extremely valuable model for contemporary nonviolence practitioners. Of

particular note, as this study illustrates, is the essential and sorely overlooked constructive program element. While dramatic forays in public political action and civil disobedience are more often associated with revolutionary social change efforts, it is the constructive program which more accurately represents the fulcrum between the work of social reform and the deeper, system-altering work of societal regeneration. Clearly it is the latter direction which Gandhian nonviolence resolutely indicates, and which Martin Luther King Jr. was more and more fully embracing during the last years of his life.

In the wake of his assassination, we can never know if King would have more clearly articulated a constructive program vision to match his increasingly radicalized commitment to nonviolence. But today's nonviolence practitioners can learn and benefit from our present vantage point. While celebrating and honoring the many and great accomplishments of King and his Freedom Movement co-workers, we should make every effort to connect such Gandhian dots that they did not manage to connect. Doing so may come to represent the best possible way to honor their legacy.

Toward that end, I hope that this study will inspire new conversations about the nature and value of the entire tripartite description of the Gandhian approach. Such conversations might serve as a point of active departure into the realm of concrete experimentation and refinement in the art of nonviolence.

REFERENCES

Albert, P.J & Hoffman, R. (Eds.). (1993). *We shall overcome: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the black freedom struggle*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Andrews, C.F. (2003). *Mahatma Gandhi: His life and ideas*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing.

Baldwin, L.V. (2010). *Never to leave us alone: The prayer life of Martin Luther King Jr.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Belafonte, Harry. (n.d.) In *Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford: Online Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_belafonte_harry_1927/

Belafonte, H.G. (2010, February 27). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Bloodworth, J. (2008). James Lawson. In *The African American national biography*. Retrieved from <http://www.mywire.com/a/African-American-National-Biography/Lawson-James/9463100/?&pbl=105>

Bondurant, J.V. (1988). *Conquest of violence: The Gandhian philosophy of conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Branch, T. (1988). *Parting the waters: America in the King years, 1954-63*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Branch, T. (1998). *Pillar of fire: America in the King years, 1963-65*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Branch, T. (2006). *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King years, 1965-68*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Brown, J.M. (1989). *Gandhi: Prisoner of hope*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Burns, J.M. (2003). *Transforming leadership*. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Burrowes, R.J. (1996). *The strategy of nonviolent defense: A Gandhian approach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Carawan, G. & Carawan, C. (1990). *Sing for freedom: The story of the civil rights movement through its songs*. Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out.

Carson, C. (1981). *In struggle: SNCC and the black awakening of the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Carson, C. (1986). Robert Parris Moses (b. 1935). In B.K. Johnpoll & H. Klehr (eds.) *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Retrieved from http://www.stanford.edu/~ccarson/articles/left_3.htm

Carson, C. (2001). African-American leadership and mass mobilization. *The Black Scholar*, 24(4), 2-7.

Carson, C. (2005). Between contending forces: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African American freedom struggle. *OAH Magazine of History*, 19(1), 17-21. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.

Charron, K.M. (2009). *Freedom's Teacher: The life of Septima Clark*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Cranton, P. (2002). Teaching for transformation. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 93 (Spring), 63-71.

Dalton, D. (1993). *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent power in action*. New York, NY: Columbia

University Press.

Dantley, M.E. (2003). Critical spirituality: enhancing transformative leadership through critical theory and African American prophetic spirituality. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 6(1), 3-17.

Deats, R. (2003). Martin Luther King, Jr.: Spirit-led prophet. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press.

Dittmer, J. (1995). *Local people: The struggle for civil rights in Mississippi*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Erikson, E.H. (1969). *Gandhi's truth: On the origins of militant nonviolence*. New York, NY: Norton.

Erskine, N.L. (2001). King and the black church. *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 48(2), 9-15.

Favors, J. (2008). Cease to live, begin to be: Black college faculty and the struggle for liberation. [Abstract]. *Conference Papers—Association for the Study of African American Life and History*, 2008 Annual Meeting, 181.

Fischer, L. (1950). *The life of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Frady, M. (2002). *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A life*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Gandhi, A. (2000). *Kasturba: A life*. New Delhi, India: Penguin.

Gandhi, M.K. (1948). *Constructive programme: Its meaning and place*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing.

Gandhi, M.K. (1957). *An autobiography: The story of my experiments with truth*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Gandhi, M.K. (1972). *All men are brothers*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Gandhi, M.K. (1999a). *Vows and observances*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books.

Gandhi, M.K. (1999b). *The way to God*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books.

Gandhi, M.K. (2001). *Non-violent resistance (satyagraha)*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Gandhi, R. (2008). *Gandhi: The man, his people, and the empire*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Garrow, D.J. (2004). *Bearing the cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York, NY: Longman.

Harding, V. (1981). *There is a river: The black struggle for freedom in America*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Co.

Harding, V. (1983). King and revolution. *The Progressive*, 47(4), 16-17.

Harding, V. (2000). Ruby Sales biography. *Veterans of Hope Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.veteransofhope.org/bio.php?p=bio&vid=37>

Harding, V. (2008). *Martin Luther King: The inconvenient hero*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Harding, V. (2009). *Hope and history: Why we must share the story of the movement*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Harding, V.G. (2009, October 20). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Harding, V.G. & Harding R.F. (2000). Reflection on James M. Lawson. *Veterans of Hope Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.veteransofhope.org/bio.php?p= bio&vid=12>

Harding, Vincent Gordon (1931-). (n.d.) In *Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford: Online Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/enc_harding_vincent_gordon_1931/

Harry Belafonte. (n.d.). *William Morris endeavor entertainment*. Retrieved from
http://www.wma.com/harry_belafonte/bio/HARRY_BELAFONTE.pdf

Heaney, T.W. & Horton, A.I. (1990). Reflective engagement for social change. In J. Mezirow and associates, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hefner, P. (2004). Spiritual transformation and nonviolent action: Interpreting Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 31(2), 264-273.

Heifetz, R.A. (1994). *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard.

Horton, M. (with Kohl, J. & Kohl, H.) (1998). *The long haul: An autobiography*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Humphries, J. (2009). Light arises out of darkness: Prophetic witness as spiritual and political practice. In Spencer, S. (ed.), *Radical witness: Four talks on faith made manifest in the World* (pp. 1-37). Boston, MA: Beacon Hill Friends House.

Jackson, T.F. (2007). *From civil rights to human rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the struggle for economic justice*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jahan, R. (2000). Transformative leadership in the 21st century. *Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics*, 1-13. Retrieved from <http://www.capwip.org/resources/womparlconf2000/downloads/jahan1.pdf>

Jensen, R., & Hammerback, J. (2000). Working in "quiet places": The community organizing rhetoric of Robert Parris Moses. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 11(1), 1-18.
doi:10.1080/106461700246689.

King, M. (1999). *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: The power of nonviolent action*. New Delhi, India: Mehta Publishers/Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

King, M.L. (1958). *Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

King, M.L. (1964). *Why we can't wait*. New York, NY: New American Library.

King, M.L. (1967). *Where do we go from here: Chaos or community?* New York, NY: Harper and Row.

King, M.L. (1967, May). Where do we go from here? [Keynote address.] 11th Annual SCLC Convention, Atlanta, GA.

King, M.L. (1968). *The trumpet of conscience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

King, M.L. (1986). A time to break silence. In J.M. Washington (Ed.), *A testament of hope: The essential writings and speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (pp. 231-244). New York, NY: HarperCollins. (Reprinted from *Freedomways*, 7 (Spring 1967), 103-117.

Large, R. (1991). Martin Luther King, Jr.: Ethics, nonviolence, and moral character. *Journal of Religious Thought*, 48(1), 51-63.

Lawson, James (n.d.). In *Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford: Online Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/enc_lawson_james_1928/

Lawson, J.M. (2009, November 23). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Lowe, M.R. (2007). An “oasis of freedom” in a “closed society”: The development of Tougaloo College as a free space in Mississippi’s civil rights movement, 1960 to 1964. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 20(4), 486-520.

Maggs-Rapport, F. (2000). Combining methodological approaches in research: ethnography and interpretive phenomenology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31(1), 219-225.

Mathai, M.P. (2000). *Mahatma Gandhi's world-view*. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Merton, T. (Ed.). (1964). *Gandhi on non-violence*. New York, NY: New Directions.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow and associates, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74 (summer), 5-12.

Miller, W.R. (1968). *Martin Luther King, Jr.: His life, martyrdom and meaning for the world*. New York, NY: Weybright and Talley.

Minnich, E. (1990). *Transforming Knowledge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Morris, A. (1981). Black southern student sit-in movement: An analysis of internal organization. *American Sociological Review*, 46(December), 744-767.

Moses, R.P. (2010, November 3). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Moses, R.P. & Cobb, C.E., Jr. (2001). *Radical equations: Civil rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Nagler, M. (2004). *The Search for a Nonviolent Future: A promise of peace for ourselves, our families, and our world*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Nisbett, R.E. (2003). *The geography of thought: How Asians and westerners think differently... and why*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Nojeim, M.J. (2004). *Gandhi and King: The power of nonviolent resistance*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Paris, P.J. (2008). Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of America: An ethical assessment. *Theology*

Today, 65, 17-25.

PBS. (n.d.) Witnesses to faith: Zoharah Simmons. Retrieved November 24, 2010 from

http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/witnesses/zohara_simmons.html

Reagon, B.J. (1997). *Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs*

1960-1966. [Booklet insert for cd collection]. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

Rosen, I. (n.d.). Black biography: Harry Belafonte [Online encyclopedia entry]. Retrieved from

<http://www.answers.com/topic/harry-belafonte>

Rubin, L. (2010). *Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee 50th Anniversary*. [Conference retrospective program]. Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee Legacy Project.

Ruby Nell Sales: Long distance runner for justice. (2008). *The SpiritHouse Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.spirithouseproject.org/aboutruby-extended.cfm>

Ruby Sales Biography. (2003). *The HistoryMakers*. Retrieved from

<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=607&category=civicMakers>

Sales, R.N. (2009, October 26). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Sharp, G. (1979). *Gandhi as a political strategist, with essays on ethics and politics*. Boston, MA: Extending Horizons.

Sheehan, J. (2006). Gandhi's constructive program—and ours. *Peacework*, 368 (September). Retrieved from <http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/gandhi-s-constructive-program-and-ours>

Simmons, G.Z. (2008). Martin Luther King revisited: A black power feminist pays homage to

the king. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24.2, 187-211.

Simmons, G.Z. (2010, October 10). Interview by C.D. Moore-Backman [Digital recording]. Recording and transcript in possession of author.

Simpson, G.M. (2008). Changing the face of the enemy: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the beloved community. *Word and World*, 28(1), 57-65.

Smith, K.L. (1989) The radicalization of Martin Luther King, Jr.: The last three years. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26.2 (1989): 270-288.

The Algebra Project (n.d.). The Algebra Project: Mission. Retrieved November 24, 2010 from <http://www.algebra.org/whoweare.php>

The Six Steps of Nonviolence (n.d.). The King Center. Retrieved March 31, 2011 from <http://www.thekingcenter.org/ProgServices/Default.aspx>

Ufford-Chase, R. (2005). *Wisdom from the desert: Jim Corbett and the principles of civil initiative – a tribute*. Retrieved March 18, 2011 from <http://www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=MD006&SRCN= articledetails&GnavID=110&SnavID=136&TnavID=&NewsID=198>

University of Florida: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Religion. (n.d.). Zoharah Simmons. Retrieved November 24, 2010 from <http://web.religion.ufl.edu/faculty/simmons.html>

Vincent G. Harding Biography. (2006). *The HistoryMakers*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=1418&category=Civicmakers&occupation=Theologian%20%26%20Author&name=Vincent%20G.%20Harding>

Washington, J.M. (Ed.). (1986). *A testament of hope: The essential writings and speeches of*

Martin Luther King, Jr. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

West, C. (1993). The religious foundations of the thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. In P.J. Albert & R. Hoffman (Eds.), *We shall overcome: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the black freedom struggle* (pp. 113-129). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press.

West, T.C. (2008). Gendered legacies of Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership. *Theology Today*, 65, 41-56.

Wise, T. (2010). With friends like these, who needs Glenn Beck?: Racism and white privilege on the liberal-left. Retrieved from <http://www.timwise.org/2010/08/with-friends-like-these-who-needs-glenn-beck-racism-and-white-privilege-on-the-liberal-left/>

York, S. (Producer & Director). (2000). *A force more powerful* [Documentary film]. United States: York Zimmerman Inc.

Zepp, I.G., & Smith, K.L. (1974). *Search for the beloved community: The thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.

APPENDICES

I. Biographical Sketches of the Interviewees.....	118
II. Interview Consent Forms.....	125
III. Sample Interview Questions.....	131

Appendix I

Biographical Sketches of the Interviewees

The following are biographical sketches of the six Freedom Movement veterans I interviewed, presented in the order in which I interviewed them.

Vincent Harding

Vincent Harding was born in Harlem on July 25, 1931. Among his formative influences he cites the black church community of his childhood, whose nonconformist approach to Christianity seems to have foreshadowed his development as an activist-theologian. Beginning in the late 1950s, Harding and his late wife Rosemarie became quite close to Martin Luther King Jr. and the King family, and were very active participants in the Southern Freedom Movement. The couple worked on various anti-segregation campaigns and were steadily active in the fields of reconciliation, nonviolence training, and civil rights education. Harding is well known for his role in writing a large portion of what became known as King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech (King, 1986, pp. 231-244). The speech represented King's most controversial denunciation of the war, which many cite as a turning point in his ministry. ("Harding, Vincent Gordon"; Harding, 2008)

Harding was the first director of the King Center in Atlanta, a teacher at Spelman College, professor of Religion and Social Transformation at Iliff School of Theology, and senior advisor for the PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize*. In 1997 he and his wife founded the Veterans of Hope Project, which promotes nonviolence, the expansion of democracy, and grassroots approaches to social change. He is author of *There Is a River* (1981), *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero* (2008) and *Hope and History* (2010). ("Vincent G. Harding Biography," 2006; "Harding, Vincent Gordon")

Ruby Sales

Ruby Sales was born in Jemison, Alabama, on July 8, 1948. As a teenager participating in the Southern Freedom Struggle, Sales had an early beginning to what would become a lifelong pursuit of social justice. (“Ruby Sales Biography,” 2003)

In 1964, Sales became involved in the Freedom Summer voter registration drive, in Lowndes County, Alabama. The campaign was organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, with whom Sales had become associated during her studies at Tuskegee University. In August, 1965, within Lowndes County’s intense climate of racial hatred, Sales witnessed the murder of her friend and co-worker, Jonathan Daniels, a white, Episcopal seminarian who had come to the South to join in the struggle for equality. The trauma of this event shook Sales to such an extent that she ceased speaking for many weeks. In time, however, she became determined to be a witness at the trial of the murderer, and was present to testify. The white storeowner was acquitted by an all-white jury. (Harding, 2000)

Soon after these experiences Sales headed to the northeastern U.S. where she sought a balance between education and activism. Over the years two key influences on Sales were the example and spiritual accompaniment of Sojourner Truth, and four years of study at the Episcopal Seminary in Cambridge. A sampling of the many projects Sales has contributed to gives a sense of the breadth of her social change work. She was director of St. Stephens Community Center in Washington, D.C., a church-based social justice center. She has been a primary organizer within the Women of All Colors movement. She has taught at Spelman College, Bucknell University, and the University of Maryland, and she is the founder and director of SpiritHouse, a national organization which seeks to unite diverse people in the pursuit of peace and justice. (Harding, 2000; “Ruby Nell Sales,” 2008)

James Lawson

James Lawson was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, in 1928, and grew up in Massillon, Ohio. Raised in a deeply religious family, Lawson credits his passion for nonviolence, which became pronounced as early as his high school years, with his formation in the Jesus tradition. Lawson translated the direction and inspiration of that tradition into a lifelong commitment to nonviolent organizing, and to ministry as a Methodist pastor. Lawson was a conscientious objector to military service in the Korean War, which landed him in prison for a period of thirteen months, and he spent three years as a Methodist missionary in India, where he immersed himself in close study and practice of Gandhian nonviolence. (Bloodworth, 2008; “Lawson, James,” *n.d.*); J. Lawson, unpublished interview, November 23, 2009)

Following his return from India to the United States, Lawson became deeply involved in the African-American Freedom Movement, in collaboration at various times with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He was the lead nonviolence trainer for the young activists who carried out the Nashville sit-in movement in 1960, and he was a key leader of and participant in the freedom rides campaign in 1961. In 1968, Lawson invited Martin Luther King Jr. to Memphis to draw attention to the ongoing struggle of the striking sanitation workers with whom Lawson had been working. During that campaign, on April 4, 1968, King was assassinated. (Harding & Harding, 2000; “Lawson, James,” *n.d.*)

Lawson remains an active worker on behalf of social causes, and he continues to both teach and train nonviolent philosophy and practice, both in classroom and community settings.

Harry Belafonte

Born to West Indian parents in Harlem, in 1927, Harold George Belafonte's formative years were divided between the city of his birth and his mother's native Jamaica. Belafonte dropped out of high school and enlisted in the U.S. Navy just following the United States' entry into World War II. During the late 1940s, after viewing a performance of the American Negro Theater, Belafonte began what would become a lifelong journey as an entertainer. Despite a great scarcity of work for black actors, Belafonte's talent as an immensely versatile performer quickly brought him into the national and international limelight. Above and beyond his acting career Belafonte was enormously popular as a singer. His 1956 album "Calypso" became the first album to ever sell over one million copies. (Rosen, (n.d); "Harry Belafonte," (n.d.)).

Since attaining superstar status Belafonte has consistently leveraged his public stature for social causes. During the 1950s and 60s he was deeply involved in the African-American Freedom Movement. During that period Belafonte became close personal friends with Martin Luther King Jr. and was part of King's inner circle of advisers and confidants. On many occasions during the struggle, King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference benefited from Belafonte's fundraising and organizing abilities, and from the many benefit concerts he performed on behalf of the movement. Another of Belafonte's key roles during the struggle was as a mediator. In particular, Belafonte was asked at various critical points to mediate between Dr. King and the young activists of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and he bore the special responsibility of forming and nurturing a collegial bridge between movement leadership and the Attorney General of the United States, Robert Kennedy. ("Belafonte, Harry," (n.d); H. Belafonte, unpublished interview, February 27, 2010; Branch, 1988)

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons was raised in Memphis, Tennessee, in a churchgoing Baptist family. In 1962, during the sit-in movement, she began attending college in Atlanta, where she made her entry into the Freedom Struggle. Through the encouragement of SNCC activists Simmons gradually became a full-time movement worker. In all, Simmons spent seven years as a SNCC organizer, working on voter registration and desegregation activities in Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama. Among her many activities, she helped to establish Freedom Schools and libraries in black communities in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer of 1964. Following the peak years of the Freedom Struggle, Simmons continued her social change work as a staff member of the American Friends Service Committee, with whom she worked for a period of 23 years. (PBS, (n.d.))

In 1971, Simmons began her practice of Sufism, the mystical stream of the Islam faith. She studied with Sheikh Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaiyadeen, a Sufi mystic from Sri Lanka, from 1971 until his death in 1986. Simmons still regards Bawa as her spiritual teacher. (PBS, (n.d.))

Simmons is currently an Assistant Professor of Religion in the Women Studies Department at the University of Florida, Gainesville. She holds a B.A. from Antioch University in Human Services, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion from Temple University. Her primary academic focus is the contemporary impact of Shari'ah (Islamic Law) on Muslim women. She currently teaches a variety of courses on race, religion and society, including a course focusing on the civil rights era of the African-American Freedom Movement. (University of Florida, (n.d.))

Robert Parris Moses

Robert Parris Moses was born on January 23, 1935, in New York City, and he grew up in a public housing project near the Harlem River. Upon his graduation from Stuyvesant High School in 1952, Moses earned a scholarship to Hamilton College, and by 1957 he had earned an M.A. degree in philosophy from Harvard University. (Carson, 1986)

In 1960 the sit-in movement led Moses to Atlanta, where he began to work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). During his brief time with SCLC, Moses came under the tutelage of community organizer and movement leader, Ella Baker, who had an indelible influence on Moses' organizing philosophy and career. In 1961 Moses became the head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee's project in McComb, Mississippi, and he eventually became director for the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a coalition of Mississippi's civil rights groups. Moses was instrumental in voter registration campaigns, the establishment of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and the planning and implementation of Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. His soft-spoken manner and his commitment to nurturing local leadership had a powerful and normative influence on SNCC, an organization whose name became synonymous with community-based, people-centered organizing. (Carson, 1986; Moses & Cobb, 2001)

Largely due to his fear that people were beginning to look on him as a figurehead leader, Moses left Mississippi after the Freedom Summer project. Opting to temporarily change his name to Bob Parris, he very actively opposed the Vietnam War and in 1966 he went to Canada to avoid the military draft. In June 1968 he and his wife Janet moved to Tanzania, where Moses

took a position as a math instructor. They returned to the United States with their four children in 1976, and Moses resumed his graduate studies in philosophy at Harvard. (Carson, 1986)

In 1982 Moses founded the Algebra Project, a national organization that seeks to ensure a quality public school education for every child in the United States. Using mathematics as an organizing tool, the Algebra Project attempts to prepare underprivileged students for employment in our increasingly technology-based society, so they can experience equitable participation and full citizenship in U.S. society. (The Algebra Project, (n.d.))

Appendix II

Interview Consent Forms

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Dr. Harding,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Urusa Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

I, VINCENT HARDING, voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature: Vincent Harding Date: 2/15/11

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Ms. Sales,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Urusa Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

I, RUBY SALES, voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature: Ruby Sales* Date: 3/3/11
(cMB)

* Due to a family emergency, Ms. Sales asked me to sign this on her behalf. We spoke by phone 3/3/11.
Denis L. Bell

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Rev. Lawson,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Urusa Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

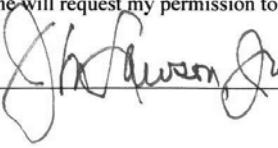


Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

I, J. M. Lawson, Jr., voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature:  Date: 4-4-2011

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Mr. Belafonte,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Urusa Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

I, Henry Belafonte, voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature: 

Date: 2-12-11

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Dr. Simmons,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Urusa Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature: Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons Date: 2/2/2011

Chris Moore-Backman ~ 1565 Elm St. #2, Chico, CA 95928 ~ 530 342 3632

REQUEST LETTER

January 26, 2011

Dear Dr. Moses,

As part of my research as a masters candidate with Lesley University's Self-Designed Masters Degree Program I am conducting interviews with various participants of the African-American Freedom Movement. My research focuses on the African-American Freedom Movement through the lens of Gandhian nonviolence. This work is overseen by an advisory committee comprised of Dr. Meenakshi Chhabra (Lesley University), Dr. Vincent Harding (Iliff School of Theology), and Dr. Ursula Fahim (California Institute of Integral Studies).

I request your participation as an interviewee and I wish to inform you about the nature of the interview process as it relates to my research. I intend to interview a total of six men and women during the course of my masters program. Each interview will last between one and two hours and each will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will provide a copy of your interview transcript upon your request. I will draw on the transcripts for various written assignments during my program, incorporating direct quotations and extrapolating themes that I deem significant to my subject. My work will culminate in a masters thesis to be written during the Spring 2011 semester. The thesis will also include direct quotations and thematic extrapolations from the interviews. Given its foundation in the well-publicized historical narrative of African-American Freedom Movement, for the purpose of this research you will be cited by name in the aforementioned writing projects. Upon your request I will gladly send you a copy of any of my completed assignments that include content from your interview. And, before seeking to publish any document which includes quotations or substantive content from your interview I will contact you to request your permission to include such content.

I will greatly appreciate your participation as an interviewee for my research project, and I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Moore-Backman
Lesley University, Self-Designed Masters Degree Program

CONSENT FORM

I, Robert P. Moses, voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Chris Moore-Backman for the purposes stated in the above letter of request.

I understand: (1) that my interview will last between one to two hours, (2) that it will be audio recorded and transcribed, (3) that Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of the transcript upon my request, (4) that direct quotations and themes that emerge during the course of the interview may appear in Chris Moore-Backman's masters thesis and other written works during the course of his program, (5) that I will be cited by name in such writings, (6) that upon my request Chris Moore-Backman will provide me with a copy of any of his completed masters program assignments that include content from my interview, and (7) that prior to seeking publication of any document that includes content from my interview he will request my permission to include such content.

Signature: Robert P. Moses  Date: 2/1/11

Hi Chris
and a
Please send a
copy of interview
transcript.
Thanks!

Appendix III

Sample Interview Questions

From Interview with Vincent Harding, October 20, 2009

At the end of [Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero] you include an interview that Rose Marie Berger did with you. She asked you a question requesting your suggestion as to what might be an appropriate action or protest to commemorate the anniversary of the second Gulf War. And at a certain point in your response you say, “I don’t have any easily stated and packaged actions because I’m thinking more than actions. I’m thinking about beings. How do we *be* in response to what’s going on?” In my previous question I was thinking about you as a practitioner of nonviolence, and how King may have informed your development, specifically with regards to nonviolence. Your answer just now, and also your answer to Rose Marie’s question, point to a very important insight, I think, about the essence of nonviolence. That matter of *being*. I was recalling today that Erik Erikson, in his book *Gandhi’s Truth*, writes that Gandhi’s aim was to “personify a purified India.” To be that embodiment. It comes across to me much more in that sense of *being*, rather than *doing*. So, if I borrow that metaphor, I’m curious, what would personifying a purified United States of America look like to you?

From Interview with Ruby Sales, October 26, 2009

Rev. James Lawson recently said that the U.S. movement for social change has yet to recover from the assassination of Dr. King. He said it will recover, but it hasn’t done so yet. I’m curious whether or not you agree.

From Interview with James Lawson, November 23, 2009

I came to this study of Dr. King and the Freedom Struggle by way of Gandhi. And I'd like to begin with a question that relates to the Gandhian method. Gene Sharp distilled the Gandhian approach to nonviolence as a threefold process of personal transformation, constructive program, and political action. Would you agree that striking a balance in applying those three aspects is critical for waging effective nonviolent struggle?

From Interview with Harry Belafonte, February 27, 2010

...But I think what interests me is not the specifically Christian nature, but that there is a language, a common language, that perhaps that core group of people, or at least a large number of them, share. Thinking...about Gandhi's movement in India...there were these words that he captured from his own religious tradition to name what it was, what these forces were that they were putting into use. And that, I think, is an important kind of glue... In my limited study so far, it seems like the language that King was using, drawing from the prophets and the Constitution... that kind of melding of those two kinds of language had a profound impact. And so it's not so much that it needs to be related to the Christian church. But I'm curious about that shared language... Is that a requirement for mobilizing a movement [with] that kind of power, to have a shared language as a foundation?

From Interview with Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, October 10, 2010

As you know, I attended the 50th anniversary conference of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee at Shaw [University] in April [2010]. And I'll admit that one of the things that struck me was how little was said about nonviolence. To me, it's ironic that "Non-

violent" is one of SNCC's middle names, but that SNCC – at least in my experience, both at the conference and through my study of the Freedom Struggle – has experienced a powerful sense of ambivalence about nonviolence all along. What can you tell me about that ambivalence?

From Interview with Bob Moses, November 3, 2010

At [the SNCC 50th Anniversary] gathering I got the sense that you're not alone in not thinking a lot about King and his role, because so many SNCC organizers...it seems like you all were in a different lane. [But] our national consciousness has framed the era as such a King-centered era. Is it your experience as someone who was working so diligently within the movement, but in a different lane than King and SCLC, do ever feel like you're... counteracting that national impulse to elevate King to the pedestal...? ...Do you think that's something that SNCC folks have done since the 60s?