

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr Study Guide

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Plot Summary

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. is a compilation of writings and speeches from the life of Martin Luther King from his rise to prominence during the 1956 Birmingham, Alabama, bus boycott to an interview given just ten days before his assassination in 1968 and articles published shortly after. Included in this book are a portion of Dr. King's sermons, speeches, and writings supporting his strong beliefs that nonviolent active protest is the only safe way in which the Negro people could gain the civil rights promised them in the Emancipation Proclamation of 1864. Though that proclamation gave freedom from physical ownership of the body, the Negroes still suffered from economical and social segregation, humiliation, subservience and oppression. When the Supreme Court ruled against the Separate but Equal doctrine that had upheld the Jim Crow laws of the South in 1954, Negroes believed that their time for true freedom had come. Leaders of the South refused to comply with the law, and nothing changed until one winter evening when a tired Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the Montgomery Bus Line to a white man. Her subsequent arrest precipitated the yearlong boycott by Negro riders who finally forced the buses to integrate. Later protest actions enabled Negroes across the South to register to vote, to insist on fair employment and promotion standards, as well as other civil rights.

Dr. King willingly participated as a committee member for the original bus boycott. Unexpectedly called on to be Chairman early in the campaign, he continued the struggle for civil rights for the rest of his life. As a minister, Dr. King determined that this protest should be a peaceful, nonviolent action, driven by love rather than hate. It was pointed out that this was similar to the actions of Gandhi. A study of Gandhi's strategies led to a Christian version of nonviolent protest actions which eventually forced federal and state governments to recognize the rights. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), elected Dr. King president, and directed the movement.

Much of the book reiterates similar ideas, philosophy, and purposes supporting nonviolent action. In many ways, this becomes redundant and repetitive. Some early chapters are portions of later included books, while none of King's books are included in total. The book gives an excellent feel for the state of mind and the efforts of Dr. King. However, it becomes overdone, almost boring with the constant restating of major points. Recognizably, Dr. King was required to repeat his speeches many times, with slight changes as he shared his philosophy many times. However, this book often exactly repeats portions of the philosophy, and same speeches. Additionally, as the books are included at the end of the book, excerpts from these books give a sense of an attempt to achieve a certain number of pages, rather than a clear, concise, use of specific speeches and articles that complete the understanding of the man without overwhelming the reader with words.

Another issue with this edition is in the front notes added by the editor. Some comments and quotes are not included in the actual article. This leads the reader to wonder what has been left out, and if the information included provides only a positive image of Dr.

King, rather than a well-rounded view of the man, problems and all. This particular edition leads one to think that Dr. King was a prophet of God, a mighty connector of peoples, and a near perfect man. Though he may have been much of this, the lack of negative images leads one to wonder what has been left out that would better give one a complete picture of this man.

Dr. Martin Luther King was an extremely logical, persuasive and eloquent speaker and writer. His arguments are clear and well presented. One wonders how the world would have changed had he not been assassinated, how his influence on the leaders of the United States and the common man would have changed the history of the United States. It is easy to be captured by his logic and accept his arguments. Other than the overuse of similar selections, this is a well-done, collection of the writings of an important historical figure.

The book is considered "essential writings" and the editor obviously was required to omit interesting portions of Dr. King's writings. This must have been an overwhelming project, and the editor is to be congratulated on his efforts. However, some of the included chapters could well have been eliminated, or shortened. If the books were considered essential, they could have done better to cover the essential ideas and ideals of Dr. King without the redundancy of the early chapters.

Nonviolence and Racial Justice

Nonviolence and Racial Justice Summary and Analysis

A Testament of Hope is a collection of the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. after his rise to prominence in the Civil Rights Movement during the Montgomery, Alabama bus strike. The book is considered "essential writings" and the editor obviously was required to omit interesting portions of Dr. King's writings. This must have been an overwhelming project, and the editor is to be congratulated on his efforts. However, some of the included chapters could well have been eliminated, or shortened. The writings and speeches become repetitious, causing the reader to become "tired" of the constant reiteration of ideas.

There are five points to consider. First, nonviolence is not for cowards. It is nonviolent physically, but aggressive spiritually. Secondly, nonviolence seeks to win the friendship and understanding of the opponent, not his humiliation or defeat. Third, it directs its efforts at the evil rather than the participants in that evil. Fourth, nonviolent resistance avoids physical violence externally and internally, using the central position of love. Finally, there is the conviction that God is on the side of truth and justice. King believed that rejecting violence to obtain justice would lead men to awaken from inhumanity to freedom and justice.

The Most Durable Power

The Most Durable Power Summary and Analysis

In the battle for freedom and justice, be dignified and disciplined, "using only the weapon of love" (p. 10). King urged his followers to not allow others to pull them down to hate, for hatred and violence will bring a long age of bitterness and chaos. He further recommended that they be sure to not attempt to defeat, humiliate, or pay back injustices. The goal is to try to share with the oppressor justice for all, black and white. In all they do, participants, both black and white, are to remember that they are Christians.

The Power of Nonviolence

The Power of Nonviolence Summary and Analysis

Dr. King discussed the appropriate use of nonviolence. Nonviolence, as a means of resisting, requires that those who follow this path to seek the friendship and understanding of the opposition rather than humiliation and defeat. Nonviolence arouses a sense of shame and builds reconciliation and redemption within society. The goal of nonviolence is to change an evil system, not to attack the individuals who are participating in that system. Thus, the struggle in the south is not a tension between black and white people.

The moderation of moving forward with self-discipline and rationality is acceptable, while a moderation of slowing in the efforts for justice, submitting to the status quo is wrong. Dr. King declared that adjusting to segregation and discrimination is never right. In these matters, it is always best to be maladjusted. Only through this maladjusted effort to create true justice and equality, can man overcome injustice.

An Experiment in Love

An Experiment in Love Summary and Analysis

Dr. King stated that from the beginning, most protesters did not see their actions as nonviolence. Rather, they saw it as an expression of Christian love, the love inspired by Jesus Christ as he called upon men to love one another. Miss Juliette Morgan, saw a relationship to the actions of those participating in the strike with the actions of Mahatma Gandhi. Those taking part in the boycott accepted the idea because they trusted their leaders. They took on themselves the technique of nonviolence, though the fundamental controlling ideal was that of the love taught by Christ.

One of the wonders of the boycott, and the ensuing struggle for civil rights, was that there was a joining of many local religious communities. White men and women who felt the need to resolve the injustices joined with the Negroes in the struggle as well.

Speech before the Youth March for Integrated Schools

Speech before the Youth March for Integrated Schools Summary and Analysis

In speaking to students in Washington, D.C., Dr. Martin Luther King spoke to a crowd integrated with both white and black youth who supported the drive for civil rights. Dr. King declared that this generation would later be called the "generation of integration" (p. 21). These young people stood for total desegregation and equality for all, now, not at some future date. These young people discovered the core value of American life involves extending democracy to all Americans and is dependent on the total integration of Negro Americans. As citizens, they will affect the future of America as they vote. Black Americans could not vote without fear of losing their lives. The denial of constitutional rights to a segment of American society degraded them. When the Negro population gained the right to vote, three million voters were able to affect the shape of Congress, to transform it into a body that is responsive to the will of all the people.

The American DreamMy Trip to the Land of Gandhi

The American DreamMy Trip to the Land of Gandhi Summary and Analysis

Martin Luther King traveled to India to see the effects of nonviolence. Many people met with him, sharing and discussing the value of nonviolent resistance in the struggle to overthrow racialism and imperialism. The trip to India personally influenced Dr. King. He marveled there was little of the hatred and bitterness that usually follows violent campaigns for freedom. In spite of the extreme poverty, Dr. King found little evidence of abuse towards each other, verbally or physically. Dr. King and his companions found that India has made great progress in breaking down the barriers of caste segregation. In many ways, India has been much more successful in desegregation than the United States.

The Social Organization of Nonviolence

The Social Organization of Nonviolence Summary and Analysis

The historic 1954 ruling of the Supreme Court was nullified by the actions of the local and state governmental authorities. Only token integration had taken place in schools across the country. This crisis supported members of the community who believed that nonviolence would never work. Some were actively organizing armed and trained militias, prepared to physically fight for their civil rights. Dr. King argued against violence. He recognized nonviolent resistance is difficult for most people. He admitted that there is a need for a moral acceptance for self-defense. He feared that the tool of violence, organized as warfare, deliberately and consciously tempts many Negroes. The danger of this strategy is that it would alienate the group of individuals in the middle, who yet have not determined that any resistance is necessary, who had not decided to support either side of the conflict.

Dr. King argued for another path, requiring organized effort from the masses seeking justice for all. This path is the path of nonviolence. Many tools are available. The goal is "never let them rest" (p. 33). They must face them squarely, in a bold, brave, and dedicated manner. The greatest need of the movement for civil rights was the need for an end to infighting, and collaboration. The powerful weapons of feet, voices, and bodies of a mass of people enabled a greater movement toward the goal of civil rights.

Pilgrimage to Nonviolence

Pilgrimage to Nonviolence Summary and Analysis

Raised in a strict fundamentalist tradition, King was shocked and stimulated by his studies over the years. From his early years, a concern about injustice and civil rights developed within Martin Luther King. He saw the injustice as attack on self. Segregation and injustice affected not only the Negroes, but also the poor whites. He believed that the true gospel concerns itself with the whole man, soul and body. The evils of slums and inequity are within the sphere of religion. The teachings of Gandhi intellectually affected him. Love-force became a significant intellectual position in his life.

It was not until the bus strike in Montgomery, Alabama, that he was able to commit to the nonviolent way of life. Action and experience taught the fine points of the strategy. Nonviolence is neither quick nor easy. It requires time, effort, and sacrifice on the part of many individuals before reaching the goal. Dr. King also came to believe in nonviolence on the international level. To be a realistic pacifist requires the church and Christians to fight against nuclear war, and world annihilation.

Over time, King found a personal God, who supported and sustained him through the trials, giving him inner peace during the turmoil of the battle for freedom. God is a living God who responds to human needs and prayers. King considered the decade of the 1950s to be exciting and filled with meaning. He watched the old systems begin to break down, making way for a spirit that God reigns supreme.

Suffering and Faith

Suffering and Faith Summary and Analysis

Personal suffering influenced and shaped the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. Since the beginning of his involvement in the struggle for civil rights and a true freedom for his people, he knew few quiet days. He suffered jailing, bombing of his home, a near-fatal stabbing, and other forms of persecution. In an effort to avoid the image of one who consciously seeks sympathy, or one with a martyr complex, Dr. King rarely discussed these events in his life. For this article, however, he agreed to discuss the effects of suffering on his spiritual growth.

Dr. King found that as he struggled, a support came from the Master, lightening his burdens as he took upon himself Christ's yoke. He determined to respond not with bitterness, but with a desire to transform his suffering into a positive and creative force. Ordeals became an opportunity to become transformed and to help to heal others involved in the battle for freedom. These personal experiences with suffering developed a faith and belief in the reality of a personal God.

Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience

Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King discussed the fact that those who oppose freedom rarely give up privileges without intense opposition. This battle involved violence, some came from the Negro, much from the privileged white population. Historically, oppression is responded to in one of three ways: to simply surrender and adjust to oppression and injustice; to rise up in physical violence; or nonviolence protest. The student movement used nonviolence, accepting the violence and hatred from others in an effort to gain freedom and justice. In this battle, the ends do not justify the means. Immoral, violent actions never lead to moral, constructive ends. The followers of nonviolence refused to inflict injury upon others, either physically or mentally. This stemmed from a development of love of men, because they are men

Willingly accepting violence from others has a way of transforming social situations. This moral commitment to refuse to cooperate with evil and cooperate with good exists. Just laws are obeyed; unjust laws are not. Unjust laws are laws forced on the minority, without voice or morality. Just laws are created with participation from all citizens. Those who disobey an unjust law and endure the penalty of jail time are expressing respect for law.

The Only Road to Freedom

The Only Road to Freedom Summary and Analysis

Dr. King argued against the stories that the Negro sought to achieve his freedom through violence. The violent outbreaks of violence resulted from the fears and prejudices of the police who goaded them to riot within their own communities. Many Negroes were ex-servicemen, trained to fight wars. Additionally, many of the migrants from the south were excellent expert shooters. If they wanted a war, they had men able to further that war.

Violent warfare is extremely expensive in money and lives. As a minority, the Negro could easily be eliminated in such a war. There was no valid reason to engage in such an expenditure of lives and money. Self-defense is a legal form of violence, but it diverts attention from the primary purpose of gaining civil rights. There is a fine line between the violence of self-defense and the aggressive violence leading to war.

Nonviolent demonstrations approached self-defense from a perspective of demonstrating against evil, oppression, and exploitation, expecting some violence. The demonstrator did not retaliate against those who perpetuate such violence. The nonviolent strategy brought pressure upon the forces that prevented justice. Needed changes were made without causing ill will among the local community. The demonstrated power of a committed coalition has brought about great changes in the lives of all people. In rejecting racism, materialism and violence, the character of Western civilization will develop a world of cooperation and peace.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Where Do We Go from Here? Summary and Analysis

Dr. King looks back on the year remembering people who had given the gift of self, a true gift of love. He particularly remembers a group of tough young men from the Chicago ghettos. They had been active members of gangs after having dropped out of school and being unable to obtain work. Their sense of manliness and recognition came from physically defending themselves.

When these young men joined them in the Freedom March in Mississippi, many feared their ability to act nonviolently. Even though attacked with tear gas, these young men protected women and children with their own bodies. In Chicago, they faced greater abuse. The marchers were attacked with verbal abuse, rocks, sticks, eggs and cherry bombs. The difference in Chicago for them was that there was a humane police force defending their exercise of their rights.

These children of the slums learned that hatred and bigotry could and should be confronted, exposed, and dealt with. Even in large cities, the men in power would listen to large numbers of people marching to express their desire for freedom and justice. These impoverished boys gave a gift of love.

Showdown for Nonviolence

Showdown for Nonviolence Summary and Analysis

This article published after Martin Luther King was assassinated declared the continuing needs of the poor in America. He stated that the government was prepared to play Russian roulette with the riots each summer. None of the basic causes of the riots had been corrected, though violent riots raged. Unemployment, intolerable housing and discrimination continued to ravage the residents of the ghettos.

The progress gained through earlier nonviolent efforts enabled an end to much of the segregation of the south, allowing many to register and vote. The North was becoming as rabid in its desire to repress the rights of blacks as the South had been. Dr. King declared a need to return to nonviolent marches, boycotts and protests, planning a series of marches for Washington, D.C. in the summer. King hoped to bring to the forefront the need of the poor to have good paying jobs, decent homes, education, and medical care.

The millions of dollars spent on fighting in Vietnam could easily pay to care for the needs of the poor. Dr. King desired for a reinstatement and increase in the past programs that held hope for the poor, as well as an economic bill of rights. Jobs declined as schools were inadequate; medical care was out of reach; and children in Mississippi were starving while land was placed in the soil bank. The rich receive parity, subsidies and incentives, while the poor receive nothing. The American people have the potential to do right.

Our Struggle

Our Struggle Summary and Analysis

Discrimination, which thrives on a belief of inferiority, caused the segregation of the Negro. White people settled their moral dilemma by rationalizing that the Negro is "less than human" (p. 75), deserving the status of second-class citizenship. They persuaded themselves, and convinced many Negroes that he was incapable of success, and would be happier if he did not try. The whites of the south forgot that they had developed this social caste system and culture, and believed the lie.

The Montgomery boycott surprised many Negroes. The boycott broke down stereotypes held by both the Negro and the white. People across the country began to be "proud to be Negro" (p. 77). Dr. King and his associates discovered an economic power essential to nonviolent protests. The method of fighting for social change became a powerful weapon. They sought to find justice in nonviolence.

The boycott was centered on the right to seat themselves from the back forward as they entered the bus. They also wanted black bus drivers for principally Negro routes. The efforts of the Montgomery authorities to discourage the boycott worked to draw the Negro community together in support of the boycott until they accomplished their goals.

Walk for Freedom

Walk for Freedom Summary and Analysis

Dr. King discussed the fight for freedom and justice in a social way. He described the resentment and humiliation that had built up within the community of Montgomery, Alabama. The population was seventy-five percent Negro, yet they were required to pay to ride the bus at the front, and then walk to the back to find a seat. To add to this humiliation, they were arrested if they refuse to give up their seat to a white person. More than ninety-nine percent of the bus riders participated in the boycott, refusing to ride the buses until they arrive at a solution to this grave injustice.

The challenge of overcoming the bias and segregation required a nonviolent, passive resistant movement to confront the forces of evil that prevent freedom and justice. The goal was to overcome evil and gain a victory for good. Love was the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the nonviolent movement. When his home was bombed, Dr. King first determined that his wife and baby were safe, and then counseled the many hundred people who had gathered that violence was not the correct response. He urged them to continue with a high level of visible love, and to carry on with dignity and discipline.

They persisted in a nonviolent attitude and love, though arrested and indicted because of the boycott. Added to the love, courage, and dignity of the people of Montgomery, Dr. King asked people everywhere to pray for peace and justice, as this was a spiritual movement as well.

The Current Crisis in Race Relations

The Current Crisis in Race Relations Summary and Analysis

Dr. King decried "... the ultimate tragedy of segregation. It not only harms one physically, but it injures one spiritually. It scars the soul and distorts the personality. It inflicts the segregator with a false sense of superiority while inflicting the segregated with a false sense of inferiority" (p. 85). The struggle, now begun, would continue to the finish. The constant challenge was to stay committed to nonviolence. He believed this would prevent an increase of hatred.

Faith in Jesus kept the resisters going. They knew that God and the moral universe seek justice. Truth always rises. The greatest moral dilemma was that in order to remain true to the gospel of Jesus Christ, ministers throughout the country must take a stand against segregation. A few courageous ministers in Atlanta signed a statement seeking an end to the segregation, an agreement to the law, and opening channels of communication again with the races. Too many ministers remained silent. They chose not to support justice.

One can never adjust to mob rule, segregation, discrimination, inequities in economics, militarism or physical violence. King argued that it was better to be maladjusted as many mighty men who taught and fought for justice were maladjusted. Such maladjustment will win peace and justice.

Who Speaks for the South?

Who Speaks for the South? Summary and Analysis

From the time of the founding of the country, a disenfranchisement of peoples has existed. The poor and landless were first to obtain their right to vote. Next, women were able to obtain that political and freeing right. It was now time for the Negro to obtain enfranchisement so they can vote in all parts of the country. Men and women have died because of their desire for the right to vote. Their blood is on the hands of all Americans, for if all Americans stood up for the freedom and rights of the Negro, all citizens of the United States would discover justice. The racist, manipulative politicians of the South had bottled up legislation intended to help all poor, both Negro and white. All the country suffers from the power of the Southern politicians.

Opening up the rights of voting to all people provided dignity for all, and improved democracy. Dr. King called for all freedom loving people to pray for freedom and fight for the right for all citizens to vote. An elimination of the crippling effects of economic and social institutions that degrade and impoverish us all must occur.

The Burning Truth in the South

The Burning Truth in the South Summary and Analysis

The movement of Negro students to gain access to lunch counters across the nation came about because of previous events within the country. After the declaration of desegregation of schools by the Supreme Court, thousands of students participated in the implementation of integrated schools. These young people gained a dedication and inspiration to fight nonviolently for their rights as human beings, deserving of respect. As young Negroes watched other nations gain freedom and the right for illiterate peasants to participate in governmental affairs, they felt trapped by the red tape and slow court processes.

A deep yearning came from within the young people, which led to their actions. They actively supported the principles of nonviolence as used in the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott. The opposition was discredited and given no reason to resort to violence. The students learned valuable lessons that would support them in the future. They lost their fear of the power wielded by the white majority and were looking to build a new brotherhood across the nation and to replace the order of democracy within the country. The segregationists faced three choices: close facilities so that none could enjoy them; make all the facilities poor, so that all would have less; or accept equality and allow good facilities for all to use equally. The final choice would enrich the nation.

An Address Before the National Press Club

An Address Before the National Press Club Summary and Analysis

The time for desegregation, integration and justice had come for the Negro. Some people fought the progress with bombs, mobs, and economic retaliation. Roadblocks of partial integration were among the most problematic challenges of the movement. Four main forces enabled the problems to be overcome. These were, first, economic growth through industrialization, which increased the purchasing power of Negroes and all other poor people there. Second, federal actions, court orders, and executive decrees restrained the heartless and encouraged better morals among the majority of the people. Third, the churches began to preach integration, accepting people of all ethnic groups. Last, and most powerful, was the growth of self-respect among the Negro people. This emerging sense of self and respect would not allow the people to revert to a subservient, demeaned class.

Actions of the struggle affected all levels and ages of society and moved beyond the Negro population into other ethnic groups and all poor. The quest for freedom and equity vitally moved toward a connected, decent community. Voting has become a federal right for all. The struggle was not easy. The goal is freedom. Active participation in civil rights and nonviolent struggle may create the achieved dream of justice and equity.

The Case Against Tokenism

The Case Against Tokenism Summary and Analysis

The time had come for the idea of racial justice, freedom, and equality. Yet, in some ways, it moved on. Normal activities resumed based on partial integration. Token integration became a new tool in the battle by those unwilling to allow total freedom and justice for all. The south was required to industrialize, developing economical power, improving medical care, opportunities for educations and acceptable housing for all. Changes came. They would further persist as federal court actions and executive decrees regulated behavior. Education and religion were needed to change attitudes.

The struggle had a collective quality, including members of all classes of society and all ages. There was a uniting effect in the struggle for universal rights and freedom. Nonviolent resistance permitted individuals to discover moral attitudes within their consciousnesses. Further, this strategy provided a moral end through a moral means. Extensive federal programs and enforcement improved voter registration. The challenge was national, though more open in the south. Other parts of the country hid discrimination in employment and lodging in more subtle ways. The progress was not nearing a solution, nor did it progress to an automatic, inevitable solution. Only tireless, persistent, dedication of members of the community could overcome the delays and injustice.

Bold Design for a New South

Bold Design for a New South Summary and Analysis

The year 1962 will be remembered paradoxically as a positive change in the battle for equality and justice, and as the year when civil rights no longer dominated the domestic scene. Much good captured the public attention; at the same time, concern to achieve a just resolution to human rights diminished perceptibly. The Cuban crisis dwarfed issues that year. Since a cautious administration and a president refused to confront Congress over issues that would remove the greatest barriers to human rights, trade and tax issues became more important to the legislature, the press, and the public. Tokenism in civil rights was responsible for this decline in civil rights being at the forefront of the public mind. Further accountability for diminishing progress in the struggle for civil freedoms and justice revealed itself in the manner in which the government dealt with issues of basic rights of the people.

The administration seemed unaware of the split in the leadership of the South. Republicans would not block legislation sponsored seriously by the President. Southern Democrats would become isolated. It was necessary that there be a strong president leading towards justice and freedom for all. Through the history of this country, the moral decision to be free has dictated the commitment to human rights. One hundred years ago, Lincoln unsuccessfully hoped to consign slavery to a secondary place. The evil heritage of slavery, segregation, lingers.

The Ethical Demands for Integration

The Ethical Demands for Integration Summary and Analysis

Martin Luther King declared that prejudice remains the greatest moral quandary for America. The manner in which we complete this vital condition can shape our moral, cultural, and political health as individuals and as a nation and leader of the free world. We must be actively democratic. Desegregation is dying. Even those who earlier had cried "never" are now admitting "later" (p. 117). He declares, however, that desegregation is not enough; there must be an integration of the people.

There is an important difference between desegregation and integration. Desegregation is negative in that it only eliminates exclusion. Integration carries a positive meaning, leading to creative, positive acceptance and interpersonal relationships among all peoples. Thus, desegregation is the means while integration is the end goal. Integration is his right by the nature of his being human.

All men are social beings. It has been determined that there is little, if any, difference between what men call races. In Christianity, all people deserve respect because God loves them. The worth of a human being derives in the fact that God loves them, not by any physical features. Integration is the right thing to do, and must be embraced. It may be difficult to achieve full integration, but integration, coupled with full desegregation is both possible and worth it. As desegregation laws were enforced, previously blocked facilities were opened. As laws are enforced habits and actions changed, hearts and attitudes changed.

Behind the Selma March

Behind the Selma March Summary and Analysis

A march planned to go from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, resulted in severe violence including unmerciful beatings by the state police. Dr. King applauded the forceful speech given by President Lyndon B. Johnson, which revealed a great depth of understanding of the problem of civil rights. The march on Selma moved the perception of Americans of the actions of Civil Rights leaders beyond a struggle to vote to a higher level of full civil rights.

A dramatization of the injustices was required for the American public to stand up for justice and equity. In every case, the government, both federal and state, request that the marchers leave the streets, rather than expect the violators of peace to desist. Civil rights leaders rejected the requests and relied on Americans to pressure the government to protect those seeking freedom and justice.

The planning of each march involved great care and strategy, never knowing when or where it would end. No one expected that the violence in Selma would erupt in such magnitude. They determined to take a middle course, and march only so far as they could peacefully, turning back when confronted by state troopers. This made the point that there was a continued level of violence, and that marchers were not participating in the violence.

The federal court order preventing the march was disappointing to the movement, for they looked to the federal judiciary to prevent unlawful intervention in their program. Rather than discouraging the Civil Rights march, the Governor should have encouraged the state troopers to avoid violence. Though it violated the injunction, Dr. King felt compelled to march at least as far as the Sunday March had traveled.

Facing the Challenge of a New Age

Facing the Challenge of a New Age Summary and Analysis

Dr. King stated that this time was momentous, filled with hope that a new social order was being born. This time appeared to be ugly, and difficult, as uprisings and discontent spread across the world. The American struggle for freedom was a part of this worldwide search for freedom and equity. In the United States, the old orders of segregation and discrimination were beginning to be transformed. One challenge was to rise above individualism, and become a member of a broader community. Another was to be excellent in whatever endeavor he was participating in. A third object was to move from hate and bitterness using a love of all humanity. This comes from the use of nonviolent strategies, learning to hate the action while loving the actor.

Dr. King reminded his listeners that though God is on their side, the new age of freedom would not arrive on its own. Men and women cannot sit quietly by and wait, participation is required. They needed to continue to struggle against segregation in all of its forms. Those most affected were required to invest their finances in their future. They required leaders who were calm, who avoided extremes, with wisdom and integrity, and who led to build the cause rather than their own egos. This new era will come through the suffering of violence upon the seekers of justice. To face and survive this violence, the participants found an amazing power in unity and courage, knowing that many would go to jail, some would be beaten, and a few were even called upon to give their lives. However, these sacrifices for their people and the cause of freedom developed dignity and worth for all people.

The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness

The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness Summary and Analysis

Dr. King discussed a new sense of dignity and self-respect fueling the new racial consciousness in the country. Increased economic status, though still exploited, had enabled Negro people to have better homes, medical care and educational opportunities. When the Supreme Court struck down the segregation laws applying to education, millions of people began to hope that they would have appropriate educational opportunities. A final element in the new sense of dignity was the knowledge that there is a worldwide struggle for freedom and equity. These people are watching for the results of the present struggle for equity in the United States. All these have combined to change the consciousness of the Negro people. This new sense of dignity developed a determination to fight against segregation until it was defeated in all areas of the country. They planned to suffer in dignity rather than to continue to allow their children to suffer the humiliation of segregation.

The important factor is that Negroes needed to continue to contribute in meaningful ways. There was no excuse for the lack of initiative due to previous conditions. The people must be more giving to causes that will help them improve. Also, the crime rate is much too high. In the effort to achieve equity, the young people needed to be prepared for the coming opportunities. They must be the best at whatever they do. They must work diligently to overcome the illness that is segregation and the lack of civil rights. The goal is to overcome the inhumanity towards man, and develop "freedom and justice for all of God's children" (p. 151).

Equality Now: The President Has the Power

Equality Now: The President Has the Power Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King took a strong stance that the injustices and inequities of segregation would more rapidly end with a U.S. President who has strong enough moral courage to take the necessary steps to solve the problems. Federal action was responsible for much of the segregation and discrimination across the country. Policies of fiscal support to agencies that supported and caused segregation sent a message that segregation was appropriate and able to be continued. Voting, employment, housing, and health practices had to be changed to eliminate discrimination and segregation. The president had a fundamental responsibility as leader of the country to lead the way forward in securing Civil Rights. He had tools readily available for use to bring about effective solutions to these problems. He had power to insist on morally responsible legislation that resolved issues that faced the Negro citizens. He could have opened the channels of communication and called for a conference of people seeking to eliminate this issue. He also had the opportunity to use the power of Executive Order. This tool was available to ensure that contractors dealing with the federal government desist from practicing discrimination in employment, housing, health opportunities and voting practices.

The Negro was excluded from skilled, clerical, or supervisory jobs in the federal government. No sanctions against discrimination were imposed. Including Negroes, as viable parts of the police forces, both federal and local, would have allowed better relations among the races across the country. Other government departments had within their power means of aiding in the ending of discrimination. He had a desire that the new presidency be guided by the conclusion of the 1946 report of the President's Commission on Civil Rights: "The United States is not so strong, the final triumph of the democratic ideal not so inevitable that we can ignore what the world thinks of us or our record" (p. 159). These words carry meaning today.

The Time for Freedom Has Come

The Time for Freedom Has Come Summary and Analysis

The struggle had moved beyond Montgomery, Alabama and people who walked rather than give in to the discriminatory bus system. It was exciting to see that all students in the colleges were participants, not just a minority. The important dimension of this group of young people came from the depth of their commitment. These students were willing to go to jail, and die, if that was required. American students gained a hope that they could break the bonds of Jim Crow laws. They pushed for desegregation beyond the tokenism of a few individuals and locations. They understood that the tools for shaping the future are education and learning for all, not just a privileged few. This spiritual explosion shattered the material atom.

The nonviolent protest experience was beneficial to the students. The knowledge and discipline forged character and moral courage. The challenge was to be discontent in a nonviolent, peaceful manner. Using satire aided in the avoidance of anger. They broke immoral laws, accepting the penalty willingly. At times, the jails were full of active students who refused to obey unjust laws. These students took action and stood for the best of the American dream. Dr. King hoped that the leaders of religion, economics, and government would take the necessary actions to end the Jim Crow laws.

In a Word: Now

In a Word: Now Summary and Analysis

After Governor George Wallace forcefully declared his stubborn resistance to desegregation and the March to Washington, D.C., four little girls were killed in a bomb blast during Sunday School. Dr. King responded to the frustration and delay of equal rights and integration. In a river, the water foams when progress is blocked. In the same way, when human progress is blocked, humanity rages. The plans for the future must include removal of the blockage, not attempt to pour oil over the troubled waters in an effort to calm them.

The hundred thousand marchers summed up everything up in one word, NOW. They wanted the president's civil rights bill to be effective, now. They needed punishment for the extreme cases of brutality now, as well as freedom and lack of fear for all to vote. The brutality of unemployment needed to end, now. Training and other means of leveling discrimination in the workplace were necessary, now. Unless, or until, these imperatives were achieved, the determination of the Negro would not mellow. The country had the power to make it happen. A creation of a first-class citizenry was a necessity, now, or the country would deal with an angry, desperate people who had tried, asked and hoped to avoid the violence.

Hammer on Civil Rights

Hammer on Civil Rights Summary and Analysis

Dr. King powerfully pointed to the necessity of the federal government to actively participate in creating a nation where civil rights are a reality for all people. He insisted that the executive, legislative, and judicial branches were responsible to implement the laws currently in place, pass stronger laws, and use the executive order. They had an obligation to ensure that all federal agencies participated in enforcement and creative innovations freeing and enfranchising all citizens of the United States.

Great strides in freedom had been made, but the battle was not over. Southern Senators continued to fight against bills. Dr. King pointed out that the President had been convinced to use the power of executive order. The movement was in no position to let up on the pressure. The community supported or met with indifference this brutal violence. The Negro lived in a police state maintained by the federal government. Courageous people willingly placed themselves in nonviolent confrontation with highly armed local armies ready to act with violence. Little children lost their lives. Others were assassinated, mutilated, flogged and bombed. The perpetrators went free, knowing that there would be no attempt to bring them to justice. The United States had become an international power that was unable to enforce even an elementary law in a southern village. Without support from the government, the Civil Rights movement may lose its ability to move the people nonviolently. Chaos was a real possibility.

Negroes Are Not Moving Too Fast

Negroes Are Not Moving Too Fast Summary and Analysis

Dr. King asserted that America is fortunate that the strength of the Negro protesters was tempered by a sense of responsibility. Myths continue to be perpetuated that could displace the hard fought gains won by the Civil Rights movement. Among the myths was the one that is the Negro moved forward too fast, and happily accepted any gains, dangerously, there would be a white backlash against these gains. The white power structure perpetuated these myths.

New laws changed little for Negro people who were still the poorest of the country, blocked by color and poverty. Charges of moving too fast were vicious and perilous. Token beginnings are not satisfactory ends. The white backlash was not apparent during the March to Washington. Negro leaders spent years teaching protesters to practice nonviolence. The white power structure called upon the Negro to reject violence without providing social change. The theory of nonviolence taught that evils were not to be accepted without meaningful change. Injustices that afflict both races could be resolved through an alliance. With a will, the nation could grow stronger and greater. All Americans who have faith in the future, using compassion, will succeed as they have in the past.

Civil Rights No. 1: The Right to Vote

Civil Rights No. 1: The Right to Vote Summary and Analysis

Few Americans realize the burden placed upon the Negro citizen in his inability to vote. Only a very small percentile of Negro citizens were allowed to register and vote. This became a crisis in the South and in the North, for Negroes moved north, swelling the ghettos. Ghettos resulted from the indifference of the southern racists and continued exploitation of segregation. Negroes migrated north in an effort to lead a decent life, finding only slums, rats, filth, unemployment and more segregation. Disenfranchisement extended in other ways. The right to vote was feared by racist Southern leaders, as a powerful tool for change.

Four main barriers existed to deny the Negro vote. First, brutality reinforced feelings of inferiority when attempting to register or vote. Secondly, abuse of laws intimidated and prevented Negroes from exercising their right to vote. Third, complex voting registration laws purposely made registration difficult. Fourth, literacy tests purposely made it difficult or impossible for even a well-educated Negro to register.

Basic principles were necessary, (1) automatic registration requiring only basic details from the applicant; (2) abolition of any literacy tests; (3) apply registration laws to all levels of government; (4) registrars appointed by and responsible to the president; and (5) versatile laws affecting the south and northern cities. American institutions could not be depended on to function without pressure. Nonviolent pressure was planned to continue until a policy of one man, one vote and one vote for every man existed.

Next Stop: The North

Next Stop: The North Summary and Analysis

Watts riots in California illuminated the tension between the Negroes and the whites in the North and Western States. The South made progress towards freedom and integration, while the rest of the country was left without dignity. The south increased respect and dignity through nonviolent means. The rest of the country was engulfed in poverty and sporadic violence. Cities moved Negroes into filthy, squalid, and hopeless slums and ghettos. Children were trapped in poor schools. Unemployment was extreme, and police brutality rationalized and denied.

While the south gained respect, the northern Negro drained its finances into their struggle. The north changed from a vibrant society to stagnant communities. Leaders expected that progress in the rest of the country would match southern improvements. The nonviolent movement forced the federal government to act with responsibility and strength in the south. In the rest of the country, similar responsibility did not happen. Southern leadership failed in their efforts to assist the desegregation process in the north. Unemployment and poverty continued to drag the northern Negroes into poverty. The riots in Los Angeles were a form of protest, commonly used through the ages, destroying the symbols of things they need. There was a need to determine whether the country would succumb to the violent few, or move forward in nonviolence securing the rights of all people.

Give Us the Ballot—We Will Transform the South

Give Us the Ballot—We Will Transform the South Summary and Analysis

The Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, filled the people of the South with hope. It struck down the Plessey v. Ferguson rule that allowed the separate but equal doctrine. Many states responded in open defiance, refusing to allow desegregation, using economic reprisals, violence and terror to prevent integration and justice. The greatest tragedy of this battle for integration was the denial of the vote. Without this right, Negro men and women would never have the right to choose for themselves as democratic citizens.

Men of justice would be elected to congress and the courts. In achieving justice, equity and integration, courageous, strong leaders were needed from four spheres of influence. First, federal leadership was urgently needed to step forward and give the vote to all citizens. Secondly, truly liberal leadership in the North was necessary to stand firmly committed to racial justice. Third, open-minded moderates of the South were needed to courageously lead through the time of transition. Last, the Negro community was required to provide intelligent, calm leadership. Dr. King challenged his people to remember that the purpose was to develop freedom and brotherhood between the races.

If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins

If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. compared the struggle of the Labor movement with the current struggle of the Civil Rights movement. Labor went through the same trials in obtaining the right to organize and the ability to freely organize and participate in economic democracy. Negroes were fighting a similar battle for freedom and the right to vote. They requested that the unions remember that the Negroes were also working people, who desired to obtain the same right to freely vote and participate in democracy.

A rebirth of ultra-right wing societies threatened to destroy both labor unions and the opportunity for Negroes to integrate fully into society. As a large component of the labor movement, Negroes expected support. Dr. King recommended that unions set the example and fully integrate. Political strength of unions would grow as the Negro received the vote. Dr. King requested that the convention resolve to effectively deal with discrimination and financially aid the struggle. Together, the dream of economic freedom, justice and unity for all people could be achieved. Jointly, they would overcome injustice, discrimination and become a true brotherhood.

The American Dream

The American Dream Summary and Analysis

America held onto a dream of all people having a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This dream was for all people, black and white, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant. Poverty and injustice affect the rich as well as the poor, the free as well as the disenfranchised. Dr. King declared that moral and spiritual advances must stay equal with technological and scientific development. Civilization moved faster than culture. Survival depends on moving forward in a moral and religious manner.

The time had come to rid the world of the false view that there is a difference between races. There is no superior or inferior race. Negroes are capable of handling the higher standards required for integration, given appropriate education and opportunity. Disabilities arose from poverty, disease and ignorance resulting from segregation and discrimination. Achievement of creative protest must be continued to reach the dream.

The choice was no longer between violence and nonviolence. With satellites and ballistic warheads threatening the world, the choice became between nonviolence and nonexistence. Dr. King called for involvement in the search for peace, maladjusted to bigotry, repressed economic conditions and the violence of militarism. This maladjustment would lead to freedom and justice for every people.

I Have A Dream

I Have A Dream Summary and Analysis

The March to Washington was a means to cash the promissory check expressed in the Declaration of Independence. One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, black men still sought the guarantee to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The Negro people had not been allowed to cash this check, for it seemed there were no funds to back it. This was the time to make democracy real for all American citizens. The urgency for justice would not be short lived. The struggle would continue until the Negro received all his rights of citizenship. Dr. King urged people to continue the fight without shrinking to hatred and violence. The effort to gain freedom and justice "meeting physical force with soul force" (p. 218) was of greater value. Until equal ability for dignity as humans was obtained, there would be no satisfaction.

Dr. King stated that he had a dream that his children would be judged by the content of their characters, not the color of their skin. He dreamed that black and white children would join as friends, transforming despair to hope, and dissonance to the harmony of brotherhood. For America to become a great nation all must be free. On that day every person, of every color, religious persuasion, and ability could join in singing the old spiritual, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last" (p. 220).

Eulogy for the Martyred Children

Eulogy for the Martyred Children Summary and Analysis

In his tribute at the funeral of the four little girls who died in the bombing of the Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared that these girls died nobly. They died as martyrs in a campaign for freedom and dignity. In their deaths, they spoke to ministers who refused to speak up, to politicians who continued to incite hatred and racism, to the federal government that compromised with undemocratic processes and to every Negro who submissively accepted segregation. To each person, the girls asked for a substitution of courage for caution. The concern was not for who killed them, but for the social system that shaped the murderers. Since these girls died, the struggle needed to persist without concessions to the dream of justice.

Their deaths were not futile; for lives given and suffering is redemptive. This horrible act of violence led to a transformation of the citizenry of the South, and the rest of the country, to an affirmation of change of conscience. Despair, bitterness, and retaliation were not choices. A belief in the goodness and ability of all to learn to respect the dignity and worth of all was necessary. To the families of the little girls, Dr. King extended consolation in their loss. They were in Church learning about God when their lives were taken. In a paraphrase of Horatio's speech over Hamlet's body, Dr. King ended with "Good-night sweet princesses; may the flight of angels take thee to thy eternal rest" (p. 223).

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech Summary and Analysis

On behalf of Negroes fighting a creative battle for racial justice, Dr. King accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. He wondered how and why he received this honor at this time when people were met with fire hoses, dogs, brutality and death. Upon contemplation, he concluded that the award came in recognition of the nonviolent response to the crucial and moral need to overcome violence without using aggression and domination.

In honoring Dr. King and the Civil Rights leadership, the Prize Committee recognized the many men, women and children who faced brutality in their peaceful struggle for justice, because they are "humble children of God . . . willing to suffer for righteousness' sake" (p. 225). He accepted the award convinced of the hope of justice in an alliance to overcome problems and a faith that mankind would choose peace over violence and life over the brutality of war. This faith led to a firm belief that a new civilization filled with peace, love and brotherhood would become a reality.

Our God is marching On!

Our God is marching On! Summary and Analysis

After several days of marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the marchers' feet were sore and their bodies were tired, but their souls were rested. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided a portion of dignity, but without the vote, it lacked strength. Nonviolent resistance was exercised once more in the midst of brutality fed by a dying order of racists. People from every faith and race came to Selma to join the march and face the dangers. The nation watched the confrontation in the small community between good and evil. Dr. King paid deep respect to the whites who cherish democracy enough to join the battle for freedom.

Segregation was on its deathbed. All people would receive the right to vote, freeing the poor of all races. People were moving toward the ballot box, freedom from injustice and poverty. The battle continued in the hands of the Negro people. There would be difficulties ahead. Many would face brutality and jail. Nonviolent resistance led to friendship and a society at peace with itself. How much longer? Not long.

A Time to Break Silence

A Time to Break Silence Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke against the war in Vietnam, agreeing that, "A time comes when silence is betrayal" (p. 231). He observed that the issues were complex and difficult to understand. Dr. King saw peace and civil rights on the same plane of existence. Both situations were conflicts that could never be resolved by violence, nor without give and take in an atmosphere of trust. Of greater importance was the heavy cost on both continents.

Dr. King considered the cost of war directly reduced the available money for social issues. The programs in place to provide help to the poor lost importance and funding. Dr. King's experiences in the ghettos of the North caused him to realize that he could no longer speak out against violence and oppression without speaking out against the violence and oppression of the war. The war poisoned the soul and hopes of men around the world. Dissenters and protesters work toward the health of the soul of America.

The war was a symptom of a deeper disease occurring within the spirit of Americans. The nation had an obligation to change their way of thinking become person-inclined rather than thing-aware. If property rights were more valuable than people were, then racism, militarism and materialism would continue to overwhelm people's rights. Values needed to be revolutionized, creating recognition that capitalism at the expense of the poor around the world is not appropriate. Justice calls for differences to be settled without violence and wars. This values revolution was the best means of defense against Communism.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Where Do We Go from Here? Summary and Analysis

Before one could answer the question of where to go from here, there was a need to know where he was. At the time of this speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted that somehow the Negro had slipped from the Constitutional sixty percent of a man to half a man. Negroes made half the money and had twice the rate of unemployment, infant mortality and deaths in Vietnam. Only one-twentieth of school children attended college, the majority held menial jobs.

To move forward, Dr. King suggested that Negro people needed psychological freedom. Negro people were challenged is to discover their economic and political power. This power, used properly, could achieve the purpose of changing the ghettos. The forces of large numbers of people who stand together with love, demanding a better way of life, was the only way to derive this kind of power.

Those who argue for violent actions were never able to show any long-term positive results of their actions. Riots stemmed from an almost suicidal desire for destruction. Those who advocate violence did not have the support of the majority of Negroes nor the majority of the whites. Their actions would fail. Only love could overcome hatred. All of society required change. Communism was not the answer; it did not enable the individual. Capitalism was not the answer; it did not allow a social life. The answer lay in a synthesis of the two on a higher plane. This could only happen with a hope in the future.

A Christmas Sermon on Peace

A Christmas Sermon on Peace Summary and Analysis

In a Christmas sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded his parishioners that there was still a hope for "'Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Men'" (p. 253). Peace comes from the knowledge that people are interdependent across the world. To have a just and real power on earth, all men everywhere must change their attitudes about the process to reach an outcome. Violent acts never create peaceful results. With peace as the goal, peaceful processes are necessary. To fully appreciate peace, one must affirm the sanctity of life. Each person on earth is a child of God and has the right to expect respect.

Dr. King explained that the burden of hatred is too great for anyone to bear. Through love of others as humans and peaceful protest, he asserted that walls of hatred, violence and discrimination could be worn away. Utilizing a belief that the universe supports peace, he called for a continued press for peace and justice. Dr. King maintained his dream of peaceful integration with respect, an end to poverty, and politicians filled with justice and mercy.

The Drum Major Instinct

The Drum Major Instinct Summary and Analysis

Dr. King addressed the basic human desire to find recognition and importance in some way. It is a sad person who is angry that another person is receiving recognition greater than his. Loss of control of the instinct leads to boasting, crime, overspending, and a desire to put others down in order to feel higher and better than them. The drive towards recognition and superiority is the base factor in racism and prejudice. This factor causes one to assist his oppressors when he should be marching for justice for the poor.

The desire to be the first is appropriate when placed in a proper setting. It is correct to desire to be first in moral greatness. When following the example of Jesus Christ, one must be first in service to others. All can serve with love. Dr. King requested that at his future funeral, the focus be on his service to others and not on the honors and awards. He spent his life as a "drum major for justice, ... peace, ... (and) righteousness" (p. 267).

Remaining Awak Through a Great Revolution

Remaining Awak Through a Great Revolution Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared that people are sleeping through a revolution. Triple revolutions of technology, weapons, and human rights were happening. They brought with them great challenge. In order to deal with these, the citizens of the world must become one in brotherhood. Technologically, the world is a community. The test is to create a brotherhood of this neighborhood.

Racial justice continued to face the nation. Racial discrimination continued in the hearts of white people, both blatantly and subtly. Individuals, government, institutions, and churches share the guilt of this injustice. Oddly, poor white peasants from Europe were given land, education, financial support and subsidies, while the Negro was denied these same rights and privileges.

Poverty needed confrontation. That poverty should exist in the wealthiest country on the earth was immoral. A final difficulty of the time was the injustice of war. There must come a time that wars and violence end, or the result will be the extinction of mankind. The end of war, the end of poverty, and the end of racial bias would not come easily, but it must end.

I See the Promised Land

I See the Promised Land Summary and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to a gathering of clergy and leaders of the civil rights movement the night before his assassination. He declared that he was happy to live in the "second half of the twentieth century" (p. 280). It was a time he would choose to live in if given a choice by God. This was a time of turmoil across the world. The goal continued to be love and nonviolent action. Economic power was available to those who united. They advised support for black institutions, banking in a savings and loan, purchasing insurance from black insurance companies, and supporting other black institutions. Even in their poverty, the blacks of the United States had greater economic strength than most countries of the world. They needed to unite in economic power.

Dr. King challenged his listeners to become unselfish without fear others. Unselfishly giving of themselves would develop a powerful nation. He ended this speech with the memorable statement, "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord" (p. 286).

Letter from Birmingham CityJail

Letter from Birmingham CityJail Summary and Analysis

Dr. King responded to a public letter from a group of concerned Alabama Clergy. He expressed concern that they were more disturbed about maintaining the status quo than the underlying conditions of demoralized Negroes who continued to be oppressed. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (p. 290).

As ministers, Dr. King expected the signers of the letter to have compassion and caring for the suffering of all men. A certain level of tension had been present across America for centuries, and was becoming evident preparatory to positive changes. The nonviolent actions were intended to bring attention to the moral wrongs affecting the Negro population. They knew that the word "wait" meant "never" in respect to gaining full citizenship. In disobedience to immoral laws, they showed full confidence and trust in the moral laws of the country, and the future opportunity for all laws to become moral.

Three points of view in respect to the gaining of human rights existed. One expected that Negroes sit quietly by and wait for recognition, rights, and respect. The other extreme proclaimed Black Power and the overthrow of the whites and their government. The SCLC took the middle road, choosing to be active in demanding rights, recognition, and respect, using the powerful, peaceful, strategy of nonviolent actions. After much thought, Dr. King felt that to be called an extremist was an honor, that he had been placed in the same category as Jesus Christ, "an extremist in love" (p. 297). Further disappointment lay in the majority of white churches not taking a stand with the Negro church leadership in an effort to prevent violence and bloodshed through nonviolent actions.

Black Power Defined

Black Power Defined Summary and Analysis

Black people who were stuck in oppression needed to develop a power through organization and collaboration. This would develop black power. The activities of the previous decade showed the possible power available to those who join to overcome the years of injustice and discrimination. Ideologically, black people needed to continue to work toward justice through action programs, learning democracy through active involvement.

Negro people had an untapped economic power that was just beginning to be discovered. An important facet was their participation in unions. This power would increase as Negroes learned to participate in the leadership of the unions, and as they organized the service sector. The other newly used force was that of economic purchases. Boycotts of specific industries and stores resulted in more people gaining better and more respectable employment, increasing buying power. Black businesses and financial institutions benefited from the focused efforts to develop jobs in the cities.

Intensified black political power was also needed. Politicians were needed who would stand up for issues and build and strengthen solidarity between Negroes, gaining alliances with other people of good will. Racism does not easily fade nor vanish. Education and political efforts would work toward greater power. Individuals who see the power of the vote and become active in politics could more rapidly bring about the desired rights.

A Testament of Hope

A Testament of Hope Summary and Analysis

1968 was filled with turmoil as war, inflation, violence, urban decay and intense poverty confronted Americans. For the Negro, these issues were intensified. The rebellion of the black community forced the nation to confront the problems of society and attempt to resolve them. Both nonviolent actions and race riots caused these problems to take precedence.

Dr. King was optimistic about the future. America continued to suffer from rabid racism, which could be seen in economic, social, and political depression. People were segregated into ghettos of the big cities. A sharing of power was required in the political process.

The war in Vietnam frustrated Negro soldiers who fought and died with whites on the front lines of battles for freedom for others. The same problems continued upon their return. Dr. King believed that if the government would use black men in positions of responsibility, there would be a change in foreign policy. Having lived in shared misery, he believed it would be more difficult for black people to exploit others. In this, Dr. King seemed blinded to the realities of the lives of his people. He knew they were not all good, but found excuses and saw only good in their behavior.

The vitally needed changes were real enforcement of the legislation that had been passed. Dr. King charged presidents with attitudes of negligence and unwillingness to change. Kennedy and Johnson received praise for gains made through the feet and wills of the Negro people. Though legislation was pushed through congress, they were unwilling to insist on implementation of laws.

The struggle for justice, humanity and dignity, and integration of people determined by their humanity, not their color, was the responsibility of moral, honest citizens. Dr. King believed that only the black people face these conditions. History shows that Native Americans and Mexicans faced these same issues. All people who are citizens of the United States have the same rights to dignity and justice.

Kenneth B. Clark Interview

Kenneth B. Clark Interview Summary and Analysis

Dr. King told Mr. Clark that he had been arrested fourteen times. He had been in new jails and very old jails. The jail keepers ranged from kind and courteous to callous and venomous in actions and speech. The only violence he was subjected to was cruel and foul language. All the jails were segregated. Perhaps jails would be the last place to be integrated.

Dr. King discussed nonviolence and the ethic of loving others. Nonviolent direct action is a realistic method that makes obsolete hatred and violence in every way. Acceptance of the strategy necessitates nonviolent thoughts and actions as a way of life, accepting violence without retaliation. It works on the conscious of aggressors. They have no way to respond. The love ethic taught by Dr. King refers to love of man, understanding and loving the person while hating the actions.

Malcom X's argument did not accept the action of a force that had resulted in change in the South. Nonviolence is active; non-resistance is passive. Dr. King insisted that rather than encouraging white supremacists, nonviolent action left them uncomfortable with their consciences, arousing a sense of guilt and shame. To continue this level of nonviolence, no person of any age, participated in actions without extensive training. Discipline was maintained through intense training. It became a part of the movement's vocabulary.

The various Civil Rights organizations frequently working together. Several had appealed to the President to be more proactive in resolving racial injustice. Dr. King argued that Kennedy had not given sufficient leadership or attention to the dilemma. Neither he nor the attorney general comprehended the complexities and urgent nature of the situation. Even with this serious situation, Dr. King was positive that all Americans could receive their rights as citizens. He knew it would be difficult. Forces in the world would work to resolve the challenges and result in integration

Playboy Interview: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Playboy Interview: Martin Luther King, Jr. Summary and Analysis

King learned specifically from three mistakes he made in their nonviolent quest for freedom. His first mistake was to accept bail to leave jail during the bus boycott. He believed that if he had stayed in prison, a more aware American conscience would have existed and the movement would have been dramatized and intensified earlier. Later, in the Albany protest against segregation, the focus was not clear enough to gain support from the people and produce public support. Later focused campaigns included emblematic objectives. A final mistake was the belief that the white Christian ministers would see the morality of the cause for civil rights for all, and join in the battle. This did not happen.

Dr. King accepted the label of militancy, claiming that militant nonviolence is powerful and just. This weapon was constructed from a love that heals. Negro casualties were less than expected since whites knew their actions were watched by the world. Extremism in refusing to obey an unjust law was acceptable.

Dr. King insisted that restrictions must end. Laws needed to be fairly enforced for all people. Poverty and its attendant terrors required focus and elimination. They would continue to press for this until full integration was attained. Riots were a result of delayed rights and token handouts. Without effective leadership directed towards achieving full rights, the possibility of many worse riots existed.

Preferred employment, grants, and housing opportunities would lift the Negro to a level similar to the rest of America. Years in slavery had prevented the abilities of creative, family supported individuals with an enhanced place in society. There was no expectation for payments for years of slavery, but grants and governmental aid would be appropriate.

Dr. King was a man in the public eye who faced many threats to his life. He refused to allow these threats to affect the way in which he conducted his life or his actions in leading the civil rights movement. Death was accepted philosophically. He believed that because his cause is moral, if he were to die, it would result in aiding the movement.

Meet the Press Television Interview

Meet the Press Television Interview Summary and Analysis

In a 1966 interview on "Meet the Press" Civil Rights Leaders discussed their opinions of the current state of civil rights affairs. They disagreed as to the level of the crisis. Dr. King stated that the distance between promises and implementation was wide. There was still need for resistance to injustices to bring the struggle to the attention of the public. Mr. Wilkins believed that the crisis was only worse outwardly, but forces of progress were succeeding. Mr. Young saw the current state of affairs to be a positive recognition of white citizens' guilt in previous repression of the Negro people. Mr. McKissick was of the opinion that though some progress has been made, for the majority of the Negroes in ghettos there had been little progress, and in many social areas, the discrimination is worse. Mr. Carmichael did not believe that a comparison of better or worse could be made in relation to civil rights. He believed that masses of black people were more politically aware, and in a position to demand that their needs and rights be met. Mr. Meredith noted that the question of the basis of society was only beginning to be decided. It was changing from white superiority. Will it become a country of equality and justice before the law?

Each denied distrust among the leaders of the multiple organizations, which were attempting to develop justice and equity for all citizens of the country. All noted that there was a difference between the laws that were passed and actual enforcement of those laws. A few local leaders caused occasional disagreements.

All agreed that the laws needed better enforcement. Federal voting registrars were needed in all localities in the South, though political leaders in the Senate managed to prevent this. Equal justice for all and a development of the Negro worker as an assertive political power were essential.

Face to Face

Face to Face Summary and Analysis

In this Face to Face interview, Dr. Martin Luther King discussed his concerns for Negroes and for the nation. The riots that had recently occurred were a major concern. Dr. King addressed the issues he saw a catalyst for the riots. Unemployment, and its resulting loss of dignity, was of great concern. Housing for those who rioted was squalid, rat infested ghettos. In California, the legislature repealed laws allowing integrated housing, forcing them into the ghettos. Negro students were not given good educations, regardless of desegregation laws. This was particularly so in the ghettos and all-black neighborhoods.

Negro Americans continued to desire greater progress. Tokenism was not acceptable. Integration and justice, including the right to vote, was a right expected and deserved by each American, regardless of color or ethnicity. One insistent need was the need to stabilize families and neighborhoods in the North.

King argued that the war in Vietnam was immoral, and that it hurt the black people more than others in the United States. More black young men reenlisted in the army, fighting more and longer in Vietnam. This was due to their ability to earn a fair wage and have a better life as soldiers, which they could not have at home.

Stride Toward Freedom (Book)

Stride Toward Freedom (Book) Summary and Analysis

In 1958, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. published this book to provide an accurate history of his life and the events surrounding the Montgomery boycott, the beginning of the civil rights movement. Before the boycott, he and his wife, Coretta, had resented segregation, though they had been shielded from it. Their families were middle class and they attended northern colleges in which segregation was not as prevalent.

He had been a preacher at his church in Montgomery for only a short while before Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to move for a white man on a bus. The community had reached the point in which they were willing to stand up for themselves, and agreed to boycott the bus system for nearly a year. Carpools were organized. Drivers included both black and white drivers; many white women who did not necessarily support the boycott, but were unwilling to lose the help of their maids, drove them to and from their homes.

The greatest difficulty was that Negro leaders did not want to be equated with the white citizens committees who had used boycotts to hurt others. To separate their efforts, the decision was made that the boycott was to be based on the philosophy of Christian love. They required that there would be no physical or spiritual violence among the participants. Many saw their walking as a means to bring about a full freedom for their children and grandchildren.

The destiny of the United States lies in democracy for all. The solution required work, sacrifice, suffering and struggle. It was necessary that the government become involved, especially the president, courts, and legislators. Social and moral change were required from the religious leaders.

The Negro people had three choices, they could continue to be passive, become violent, or choose the nonviolent path of action. The way would not be quick or easy. They would need to be willing to suffer and sacrifice, as they worked for integration and the right to vote.

The Strength to Love (Book)

The Strength to Love (Book) Summary and Analysis

Included in this collection of writings are only three of the thirteen or more chapters originally published in the book. The included chapters relating directly to the sermons teaching and supporting the civil rights movement. Using the pulpit, King taught courage, love, overcoming fear, and the love of God as means to grow and prepare for the challenges.

Life at its best is a synthesis of oppositions. Successful people are tough-minded and tender-hearted. Tough-minded people are realistic, decisive, astute, and firm of purpose. Without a tender heart, tough-minded people become hard. Tough-minded people have the ability for clear, solid thinking, which is rare. Soft-minded people are overwhelmed by fear of change, half-truths, prejudices and propaganda. They do not think things through, and are easily swayed by advertisements and prejudices. Weak thinking is a cause of racial prejudice.

One who has a tender heart loves others, regardless of hatred and violence directed their way. Hardhearted people never learn to love, becoming isolated in compassionless life. These people use people as things, rather than individuals. This gave them the ability to have slaves and maintain segregation. In order to overcome the discrimination, Negro people could not continue to be soft-minded and accept injustices, nor could they be hardhearted and filled with hate and violence. Nonviolent resistance combined tough-minded resistance with a softhearted love for others, working passionately and unrelentingly for freedom. It required high moral standards of love, honesty and truth. God is a tough-minded God with a soft heart, filled with mercy and love.

Why We Can't Wait (Book)

Why We Can't Wait (Book) Summary and Analysis

This book was written by Martin Luther King, Jr. as a history of the efforts for desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama, which was the most violent, ruthless place in which they attempted to gain justice and equity for the Negro. The editor chose to include only four of the chapters of the book. There may have been other interesting and enlightening chapters that would help our understanding of King and the things he wrote. These chapters highlight the thesis of his book that King was a great prophet and leader of the black people and the civil rights movement.

Life in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 was difficult. None of the desegregation laws had taken effect there. The leaders took pride in their virulent opposition to the Civil Rights Laws and anti-segregation laws. Reverend Shuttleworth, the Birmingham Civil Rights leader, in New York surprised those at a planning meeting saying, "You have to be prepared to die before you can begin to live" (p. 533). They prepared secret plans to break down the united front presented by the city leaders and merchants. The plan was delayed until after elections were over.

Through the conflict, the only weapons used were the conviction that they were right and a willingness to go to jail and face the well-known brutality directed by Bull Connor. People of all ages marched, filling the jails, facing dogs, clubbings, and pressure hoses. Students left schools to participate, using humor and creative ploys to allow others to complete the planned marches without arrests.

After nearly two months, the Kennedy administration sent Burke Marshall to mediate between the city leaders, merchants and the Negro leadership. They agreed to the demands of the marchers. The rabid segregationists did not accept the negotiations. President Kennedy ordered in three thousand federal troops to maintain order. Birmingham was integrated in a limited way. It still required positive changes to create an integrated community.

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? Summary and Analysis

This book compiled a history of the nonviolent movement for civil rights, an argument against Black Power as a movement, and Dr. King's vision for the needs of the country and the world. Mr. Washington, who edited all the book of writings and speeches, chose to include only chapters one, two, five and six of the original. The missing chapters may be vital to an understanding of Martin Luther King and the challenges he faced in his efforts to obtain justice and rights for all people of the country.

In the years after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, bigotry, prejudice and hypocrisy combined with half-truths and lies. The majority of changes were an allowance of decency, but not equity. The changes were cheap, laws enacted without support provided changes and minimal reform with no real freedom. Words are not supported by deeds.

New leaders of other civil rights organizations looked to find another way to obtain more quickly the justice that Dr. King's nonviolent movement had been addressing since 1954. They sought redress in a more violent manner, using the slogan Black Power, rather than Freedom Now. Dr. King argued that the slogan suggested violence against whites, and power at any cost. As a slogan, Black Power was divisive rather than uniting, splitting the movement.

Black Power is positive and necessary as a call to develop political and economical goals. Blacks require a sense of power to change the status quo. Black Power worked well as a slogan, but provided little in actual ability to progress toward equity. Cooperation brought a hope for integration, power for the poor, equal and fair education, and valued employment. Black people can accept themselves, their history and their cultural heritage without destroying the heritage of others.

Only personal character and social justice can lead to happiness. Without a change from an attitude of self-preservation to preservation for all, in an interdependent world, there would continue to be hatred and war. earth. A combination of the best of each would lead to the compassion and values.

The Trumpet of Conscience (Book)

The Trumpet of Conscience (Book) Summary and Analysis

This book written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. continued the earlier discussion against the war in Vietnam, repeating many of the same arguments, and adding to them after a time of facing detractors and refining his arguments. The concerns against the Vietnamese war were based on the moral issues of war working against poverty, as it drew effort and money away from the war on poverty. He based his argument that the war was an enemy to the poor on the fact that the greatest percentage of the men fighting and dying was poor black young men who fought in a foreign country for freedoms he was not able to enjoy in his own home. The violence in the ghettos mimicked the war, with young black men facing soldiers and guardsmen. King believed that the Peace Prize had given him a commission to work for peace for all men.

The beginning phase of the peace protest was over; it had reached a plateau. Many considered it to be a failure and viewed the movement with suspicion. Successful new forms of protest and progress are needed. The emergency was economic injustice. To King, nonviolent action on a planetary scale was no longer an option, it had become imperative for prevention of nuclear annihilation.

Looking back at Dr. King's evaluation of the world, and its needs, in many ways he may have been correct. However, because the wealthy have the power to overlook the poor, Dr. King may have been overly confident. It would have been easy for the federal government to wage war on the poor as they did during Hoover's time. Many Hoovervilles were destroyed, including those who marched on Washington, demanding aid for the poor and needy. It will take much more than marches and demands for the poor to receive rights of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness.

War is still with us. It is still a concern that disagreeing with the leadership of the country as to the morality of a war may lead to a charge of treason. Little has changed in the fifty years since the martyrdom of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Conversation With Martin Luther King

Conversation With Martin Luther King Summary and Analysis

This conversation was held just ten days before Martin Luther King's assassination. Dr King addressed the crisis in the nation, particularly the confusion of priorities. Integration would necessarily include an integration of power for all. It would enrich the ghettos, needing increased and better housing, schools, economic conditions, and medical care.

Jews have been their best ally. The ghetto was a sore point in Negro/Jewish relations, for often the ghetto landlord or grocer was a Jew who had owned and lived in the ghetto before the Negroes. These businesses often charged an additional few cents on each item, reducing the ability of the already poor to succeed. The slumlords, many of whom were Jewish, charge fifteen percent more for a few rundown rooms than could be rented by whites in nearby apartment buildings. This appeared to be a color tax. One cannot be a victim of evil and participate in a similar evil against others. Anti-Semitism or any other form of racism is immoral.

The poor live among us, but they easily become invisible. They suffer from economic deprivation, poor education and bad or non-existent health facilities. These conditions will continue to affect the poor of the country without pressure. The Rabbinical Counsel could continue as they had in the past. It would continue to help if the Rabbis would seek to destroy the myths of inferiority based on color which would lead to greater understanding between their people.

Characters

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a well educated, middle-class Negro preacher who had earned his Doctorate Degree in Theology at the age of twenty-four years. His frustration with segregation in the South led his wife, Coretta, and him to accept the invitation to preach at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Shortly after his arrival, Negro people reached their limit for being pushed around on buses, and the Montgomery bus boycott was called. Originally called for only one day, it continued more than twelve months with ninety-nine percent of the Negro population refusing to ride the bus until integration and other demands for justice within the bus company had been resolved.

During this time, Dr. King was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association and the broader Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He worked with others in directing the necessary operations and tactics to direct the boycott through to success. He was called on to speak at most of the mass meetings designed to build the level of activism and teach the theory of brotherly love in order to keep the struggle nonviolent on the part of his people. After studying the works of Mahatma Gandhi in India, he refined his theory and developed a confidence in nonviolent confrontation.

Dr. King immediately found himself the target of hate mail, death threats, and bombings of his home. Through it all, he continued to preach peace and nonviolence. His strategy included peaceful confrontation, which would publicly evoke the tensions and violence of the whites who had always been brutal. In the face of nonviolent resistance, these violent and brutal people eventually developed a sense of guilt, which led to a change in behavior and resistance to integration.

The Civil Rights Movement, led by Dr. King, participated in marches throughout the South. Marches in Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham, Alabama, and Washington, D. C. were historically effective. The pressure placed on the federal and state governments eventually led to Civil Rights Voting Acts and other Civil Rights Acts. Even with federal laws, it required nonviolent resistance to ensure enforcement of the laws. No law passed was automatically enforced by either state or federal law enforcement without persistent pressure from the movement.

From December 1955 until his martyrdom in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the effort to obtain civil rights for all citizens of the United States, fought poverty, and called for peace in Viet Nam and throughout the world. At every juncture, there were detractors who questioned why he would preach and fight for issues of social justice. In every instance, King returned to his roots as a minister and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ as his example.

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was a young seamstress who boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus headed home after a long day of work. She sat at the beginning of the section reserved for Negro riders. As the bus filled, a white man demanded that she leave her seat and stand for the rest of the trip. After refusing to give up her seat, she was arrested. She was unwilling to be humiliated any more, and her feet hurt.

Dr. King stated that though she was not a plant by the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), she was ideal for the role. She was a charming, personable, and soft-spoken lady who was calm in all situations. She had an unimpeachable character and a deep-rooted dedication to the cause of civil rights.

Though Mrs. Parks had worked for the NAACP as a secretary, she was not "planted." The choice to stay seated, regardless of the consequences, was hers. As a respected member of the community, another member of the community paid her bail bond, and the indignation at her arrest led to influential women pushing for a boycott to protest her arrest. Hers was the first clear-cut case in which a Negro was found guilty of disobedience to the segregation laws.

Ralph Abernathy

The Reverend Ralph Abernathy a young minister of Montgomery's First Baptist Church who was to become central in the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement. Abernathy was among the original three who called for the Montgomery bus boycott. He chaired the committee that drew up the demands for a settling of the boycott, as well as participation on the strategy committee. Long active in civic affairs, Abernathy was called on to be the vice-president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King were close confidants and associates from the beginning and throughout the struggle for civil rights. Abernathy was a trusted friend who had a good sense of humor that lightened many tense situations. Together they prayed and made important decisions.

Abernathy joined the first integrated bus ride in Montgomery, Alabama. This was televised, and occurred with no major confrontations. The riders rode with dignity, and refused to be offended by any overt hostility.

A few days after this historic ride, Ralph Abernathy's home and church were bombed, along with other buildings.

During the mass meetings to lift up the spirits of the Birmingham action, it was Ralph Abernathy who lifted them in enthusiasm "with his unique combination of humor and dedication...When he plants himself behind the lectern, squat and powerful, his round face breaking easily into laughter, his listeners both love and believe him" (p. 535).

Eugene

Eugene "Bull" Connors was the commissioner of public safety in the city of Birmingham, Alabama. A rabid racist, he prided himself on his ability to keep the Negro in his place. He had been entrenched in a key position of the Birmingham power structure. He held contempt for rights for the Negro as well as defiance for federal governmental authority. He was brutal and violent, and did nothing to suppress any of the racist brutalities against the Negroes in his community. Murders, castrations, mobbing, and bombings were common under his leadership.

Bull Connor felt such power that he arrested a United States senator for walking through a door marked "colored." He arrested the manager of the local bus station when he attempted to implement the desegregation law on the bus. He controlled with fear and guilt.

During the sixty-five days of nonviolent actions, people of all ages, from little children to senior citizens, were arrested, clubbed, attacked by dogs, and blasted with fire hoses. His vicious brutality was displayed on televisions and newspapers for the world to see.

After the end of the Birmingham campaign, Eugene "Bull" Connor and his fellow commissioners were ruled to have been defeated in the previous election, and put out of office.

Coretta Scott King

Coretta Scott King was the wife and supporter of Martin Luther King, Jr. during the years of his leadership of the civil rights movement. She raised their four children, alone much of the time, as Martin was often traveling to speak work for civil rights across the South. She was calm in the bombing of her home, and supported her husband in his calling to be a leader of the movement.

E.D. Nixon

E.D. Nixon was a former state president of the NAACP and a protest leader in Montgomery, Alabama. He posted bail for Rosa Parks, and was a leader in the call for a citywide bus boycott. His support of King was welcome. His home was the second home to be bombed, one day after the home of Dr. King during the early days of the boycott.

Governor George Wallace

Governor George Wallace was governor of Alabama during the height of the battle for desegregation. He militantly refused to bow to the federal government's decree that the

state be desegregated. He stood in front of the door to the University of Alabama preventing black students from registering. He was deeply opposed to racial justice.

President John F. Kennedy

President John F. Kennedy was elected in the middle of the civil rights effort. He had an opportunity to do much good in insisting on enforcement of laws and Supreme Court decrees. He was not vigilant in this. He did not voluntarily submit civil rights bills to congress, believing that they were impossible to pass. He backed away from his campaign promise to solve housing problems, and when he did sign it two years later, it lacked provisions to prevent discrimination. He began the process of integrating the civil service. Kennedy was assassinated 22 November, 1963.

President Lyndon B. Johnson

President Lyndon Baines Johnson was Vice-President under Kennedy, and President after Kennedy's assassination. Johnson headed the Civil Rights Commission, and called for the rights of the Negro people. After the violence at Selma, he spoke to a joint session of Congress, revealing an understanding of the depth and dimensions of the racial injustice problem. He moved past the issue of the right to vote to the real and "vital issue of equality and human rights" (p. 127). He signed the Voting Rights Bill of 1965, believing that it would end racism. He was wrong.

Sheriff James G. Clark

Sheriff James G. Clark, of Selma, Dallas, Alabama, was a shrewd, avid segregationist who fought giving the right of the ballot to the Negro. He refused to use the usual brutality in front of the television cameras. He was finally forced to arrest King and 770 other demonstrators. When the marchers left his jurisdiction and went into state jurisdiction, they were beaten unmercifully in front of the cameras for the nation to see.

Judge Frank M. Johnson

Judge Frank M. Johnson was a federal district court in Montgomery, Alabama. He disappointed the leadership of the civil rights movement by issuing an order preventing the civil rights movement from peacefully marching from Selma to the Capital of Montgomery in an effort to gain the right to vote. The civil rights leadership had counted upon federal judges to prevent unlawful interference to their rights rather than participate in the interferences.

Professor Abraham Joshua Heshel

Professor Abraham Joshua Heshel was a leading Rabbi. He participated in many of the struggles and marches with the civil rights movement. He joined the march from Selma to Montgomery, and participated in the Chicago for the Conference on Religion and Race. He did not hide behind his religion, but stood beside the leaders.

Malcom X

Malcom X was an articulate proponent of the Black Muslim philosophy, and an opponent of Dr. King and the nonviolent movement. He considered King to be working for the whites rather than working to improve the lives of the Negroes.

Stokely Carmichael

Stokely Carmichael was the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He was a graduate of Howard University and the youngest of the civil rights leaders. He used the slogan "black power" which led to a break in the leadership of the civil rights leadership. He believed in more use of violence in "self protection" and no longer wanted to include white volunteers in the marches and protests.

Burke Marshall

Burke Marshall was the chief civil rights assistant to the attorney general in 1963 during the Birmingham campaign for civil rights. He was sent to Birmingham to seek an understanding that would end the violence. With no power to insist upon a solution, he did have the backing of the president. Rather than the expected requesting of a cooling off period, Marshall acted as negotiator between the civil rights leaders and the white leaders of the community. He was recognized as one who listened, and was one to whom others listened. He enabled a settlement between community business and industry leaders and the leaders of the movement.

Objects/Places

Ebenezer Baptist Church

The Church which Martin Luther King, Jr. co-pastored with his father.

Montgomery Bus Boycott

The Negro boycott of the Montgomery Bus system which lasted for nearly a year. It was the first use of nonviolent protest, and brought about the first integrated bus system in the South.

Nonviolent protests/actions/marches

Large group protests in which there was no violence on the part of the protesters. They willingly went to jail for breaking the law, and accepted the brutality of racist sheriffs in order to bring to public attention the injustices and indignities faced by the Southern Negro people.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

The civil rights group organized shortly after the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott by Negro leaders throughout the South committed to changing Jim Crow and other segregation laws. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the president of this organization from its inception until his death.

segregation

The separation of black and white people in public facilities. There were separate drinking fountains, bathrooms, parks, and swimming pools. The Negroes could only use back doors and separate seating areas in theaters. All Negroes were required to sit at the back of the bus, and give up their seat if there were not enough seats for the white riders.

Jim Crow Laws

Informal laws in the South that made segregation legal.



Sit-ins

Organized student activities where students, black and white, would occupy all the seats at a lunch counter, library, or other area in which the Negroes were not allowed to be served.

Ku Klux Klan

A white supremacist group of men who refused to allow Negro people rights as equals. They wore white hoods, burned crosses in Negro lawns, bombed homes, murdered, and terrorized Negro people in order to "keep them in line."

Agape

The Greek word used to denote the love people have for others because they are people. This is a love of fellow man in which the person is loved for who they are, not for what they do.

Vietnam War

A conflict between two sections of the country of Vietnam, in which the United States became involved. The basis for this war was, and the history indicates that U.S. involvement was less than honorable.

Napalm

A fiery gas that burned everything it touched that was sprayed onto the forests of Vietnam in order to burn away the forests and expose possible enemies.

The Poor

People who do not have enough money to provide food, clothing, housing or medical care for themselves or their families.

Separate but Equal

Law that allowed segregated schools in the south, on the pretext that the schools for the Negro children would be equal to the schools for white children. Negro schools were less well equipped and funded. Often old, used books from white schools would be given to the Negro schools for their children to use.

March on Washington

A mass march of civil rights protesters, both black and white, who marched to Washington to protest the lack of voting rights for Negro people.

President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders

A federal group commissioned to investigate the underlying issues behind civil disorders and racial tension, including riots.

Selma, Alabama

The location of a march intended to march to Montgomery to highlight the need for the right to vote in Alabama. Instead, marchers of all ages were brutally beaten and attacked by dogs and pressure hoses.

Birmingham, Alabama

The location of a long, protracted nonviolent protest against injustice towards black people. After 63 days, the merchants and industrial leaders realized that the protest would not end without a resolution that would provide human rights for all.

Themes

Justice

Justice is a principle of moral rightness and fairness. In seeking justice, Martin Luther King, Jr. taught that it was moral to be disobedient to an immoral law if one was willing to pay the penalty. King defines a moral law as one which uplifts humanity. Unjust laws impose on the minority things which are not binding upon the majority. If that minority had neither say nor part in enacting the law that is degrading to them, the law is unjust. A just law is sane, a law made by the majority which all must obey equally. Just laws provide justice. Unjust laws allow injustice.

In seeking desegregation and dignity for the Negro people, Martin Luther King fought for justice. In order to prevent degradation, humiliation and brutality, Negroes were forced to be submissive to white people. Although the Emancipation Proclamation gave the Negro the right to be equal citizens, including the right to vote, this right was rarely available to them. Many laws were enacted to make it more difficult, if not impossible for the Negro to vote. By 1950, the literacy tests were so difficult that even the educated had a difficult time passing them in order to register to vote. Lack of the right to vote enabled southern state and federal legislatures to be filled with racist men who had no respect for the Negro. The Ku Klux Klan was a brutal, murderous, and cruel group without any accountability to law. None of their atrocities were tried or convicted in courts. They had freedom to lynch, bomb, and instigate fear among the Negro people.

Each of these issues, and more, indicated a lack of justice for the Negro people. Laws were passed to allow for each of these rights, but without standing up for them, the rights were just words on paper. The racist white leaders refused to allow true justice to be given to the Negro people. For this reason, the civil rights movement continued after the Montgomery bus boycott. Rather than violently fight for this justice, they followed the nonviolent protest model as presented to them by Martin Luther King, Jr. Many years, marches, and cities later, some semblance of justice had been achieved. Even after the martyrdom of King, the ongoing battle for justice continues.

One wonders if there is yet a justice in this country or this world. As in the 1950s, the poor, colored and different face injustice in the courts. The injustice is not blatant, as it was in the south, but it is as subtle as it was in the north during King's battle for freedom and justice. There is greater justice, but not total, complete justice, within the United States of today.

Racism

Racism is an unmerited, hatred for another person based solely on color, race, or culture. Racism holds one group of people inferior to others. From 1619 when slaves were first imported into the colonies, Negroes were considered inferior to others. The



Constitution considered black slaves to be two-thirds of a person, further reducing the Negro to the status of less than a person. The use of people as slaves, or later to segregate them from others, required a racism that considers people as things rather than humans.

Segregating people from others continued the racism from the days of slavery. This included the separate but equal doctrine approved by the Supreme Court in 1896 when passing the decision on Plessy v. Ferguson. This doctrine allowed Negro people to be treated as less than human, as they pretended that separate was equal to the rights and prospects of the whites. Separated schools, facilities, even seating on buses and other transportation kept them in a situation of inferiority. Many began to believe that they were inferior after years of degradation and mistreatment. They had begun to believe the many stories that Negroes were inferior due to their heritage.

Racism existed in many ways throughout the United States. In the north, it was more subtle. Men were able to get jobs, at lower wages than whites. Women were able to get jobs, and often lost their jobs after the men. Negroes were crowded into filthy, bug- and rat-infested ghettos. They were charged more for these inferior places to live than the nicer homes for whites in nearby neighborhoods. Food cost more in the ghettos than in other parts of the cities. Families were able to get homes, but they were all in colored neighborhoods. The Negro was looked upon as one who could not be trusted.

In the South there additional bitter hatred of the black people. The Ku Klux Klan ran rampant through the country creating hatred and fear in the Negro people. They were known to lynch, mob, burn, bomb, and murder Negro men when they desired. All facilities were separated: rest rooms, drinking fountains, movie theaters, swimming pools, buses. The only jobs available to the Negroes were menial, service jobs. Even those who had attained professional degrees were limited in the work in which they could participate. There was no respect or dignity given to the Negro.

The success of the Montgomery boycott gave many Negroes an understanding that there was hope to be someone other than a menial servant to white people. They began to develop a dignity and pride in themselves that had not been there before. One major goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to eliminate racism in America.

Racism is still evident in the United States. It is still prolific in the black ghettos of the cities. It reigns in the opinions of residents who fear gangs of Asians and Hispanics. It ravages the hearts of citizens who fear the Arab and the immigrant. Racism exists today. Until men understand others, and begin to have a love for others, because they are human, racism will continue to exist.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence is seen by many to be merely an absence of violent actions. As taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., nonviolence was something different. They taught that nonviolence was a means to social change. This nonviolence required that people

confront racism and dehumanizing conditions with marches, sit-ins, and other nonviolent actions. In order to gain freedom, they had to confront the conditions that prevented that freedom. Violent confrontations solve no social problems, they create more and worse problems. Only through nonviolent action can people gain the respect and the freedom they desire.

As participants of nonviolent protest, there was a need to be taught to change thoughts as well as actions. Nonviolence is more than not fighting back when brutalized and humiliated. It is more than peacefully accepting arrest and jail sentences. In order for nonviolent action to successfully achieve its purpose, it must bring about a change of heart within those who are causing the violence, brutality and injustice. Through actions of nonviolence, a sense of guilt is developed within the racists and others who participate in acts of segregation, degradation, and injustice.

Participants signed pledges to act in a nonviolent manner as they protested. They practiced nonviolence in situations they might face violence. More importantly, they were taught to believe in God's love for men, and that all men are children of God. They were taught to find a love of men because they are children of God, and are deserving of love and respect. This kind of love developed an internal level of nonviolence, one in which nonviolence is deeply ingrained into one's heart and mind as well as within one's actions.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught this strategy well to his followers. None fought back regardless of the brutality and violence they were required to suffer. The only violence to occur came from watchers who had not been trained in the difficult behavior of nonviolent action and thought. Later violent rioting proved Dr. King correct in his statement that violent actions caused greater problems for all.

A need for nonviolence is ever present. Regardless of the battles fought, or personal suffering, nonviolent action and thought will lead to a successful resolution in all cases. If this world is to ever gain peace, it must be gained through nonviolent actions by people who recognize that all men are children of God, and that only nonviolent protests and actions will bring about that peace.

Style

Perspective

"A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr." is written entirely in the first person perspective. Dr. King speaks and writes of the actions and beliefs that he holds personally. He describes his life as a youth and the events that lead him to the leadership of the human rights, or nonviolent social disobedience. He includes a history of the Negro people in America and the ways this history has led to the social unrest felt in his time.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was raised in a middle-class family as the son of a preacher. His intelligence allowed him to attend Morehouse College without completing high school. He earned his doctorate in theology. He had been licensed to preach in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, as co-pastor with his father at the age of eighteen. His wife, Coretta, had lived in Marion, Alabama, as a child. She, too, had had the opportunity to live in a middle-class family and had studied music in Boston where the two had met.

From an early age, both Martin and Coretta had suffered from segregation, and both abhorred it. It was a difficult decision for them to return to the south and its extreme Jim Crow segregation laws. Martin had watched his father refuse to bend to the laws, refusing to buy shoes when required to move to the correct section of seating, reminding a police officer who was ticketing him for speeding that his son was the "boy," not the father, and refusing to ever ride public buses after seeing a brutal attack on a large group of Negro riders. Martin had learned early to loathe segregation, and found it easy to agree to participate in the Montgomery bus boycott.

The position of President of the Montgomery Improvement Association was thrust upon him so quickly that he hardly had time to consider it. It changed his life. From that December 1955 day until his assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. was a leader in the movement for justice and respect for the Negro people.

In every speech, writing, and protest action, the purpose was carefully considered, in order to assure that the means of achieving this purpose was moral. By using nonviolent actions and a love of men, because of their humanity, he was able to instill in the demonstrators an understanding of seeking moral rightness rather than violent determinism.

Tone

The writings and speeches of Martin Luther King were always carefully worded, using his position and calling as a minister to set the tone, in "A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr." His tone varied in relation to his audience. He was able to speak to the humble, lifting them up and encouraging

them in difficult circumstances. He could also speak with other well-educated men, using words and phrases that are often difficult to understand. He was comfortable in speaking with any audience and with any interviewer.

When discussing Dr. King's tone, Kenneth B. Clark observed, "...—a calm, quiet, confident belief in the future." (p. 331) His philosophy of love and nonviolence was genuine and an integral part of his personality. It is not just a philosophy or a strategy; it is his personal position. He is seen as "quiet, contemplative, at times exasperatingly academic" (p. 331) in style, paradoxically a scholar and a man of effective social action.

Several men who discussed Martin Luther King, Jr. commented on his quiet demeanor and that by looking and listening to him, one would not suspect that he had exposed himself repeatedly to death and brutality. The power of his personality, the force and depth of his convictions made major changes in the south and the north. King was always dignified in his speech and writings.

In writing about the difficulty of finding time into which to sandwich an interview with "Playboy," the editor discusses his heavy commitment to the cause, his heavy schedule as a preacher, as well as the constant flow of death threats and obscenities that came daily in his mail. They remark, "Though he spoke with heartfelt and often eloquent sincerity, his tone was one of businesslike detachment. And his mood, except for one or two flickering smiles of irony, was gravely serious..." (p. 341).

The tone of this book, then, is gravely serious, calm, and one of hope and encouragement for his followers. There were always references to his ministry, and to the responsibility to be moral and right before God. He never shrank from his calling as a minister; he always included references to God and a tone of dependence on God.

Structure

"A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr." is structured in five parts with an appendix. Each part follows a specific theme or type of writing or interview. All chapters include a short head note by the editor of the book, attempting to place the chapter in history and add personal notes about Dr. King as a man, a writer, a speaker, and a prophet. These both add to and detract from the writings of Dr. King. Some notes assume an understanding by the reader, which actually leave the reader with greater questions. Each section or subsection is presented in chronological order.

Part I discusses the philosophy of nonviolence. It is divided into three subsections titled Religious: Nonviolence; Social: Integration; and Political: Wedged Between Democracy and Black Nationalism. Each subsection includes from nine to thirteen short speeches that discuss each of these three subsections of the philosophy of nonviolence. These chapters comprise two to twelve pages each, averaging about five pages per chapter. Each chapter is directed toward a different group of people, and is different in minor ways. Much in these chapters is similar. Dr. King consistently used the same phrases,

images, and metaphors, explaining love for others, using Greek terms of eros, philia, and agape. This was his method of sharing his insights into brotherly love whenever he taught this philosophy.

Part II includes thirteen famous sermons and public addresses. These chapters are generally short, from three to thirteen pages, with an average of about six pages. These, too, include many restatements of earlier philosophies. Additionally, Dr. King openly reveals his stance against the Vietnam War. Each sermon or speech is directed to a different group of people. These allow the reader to appreciate the different facets of Dr. King's concerns for true justice and freedom, not only for the Negro people, but also for poor white people.

Part III includes historic essays and is the shortest section of the book, including three essays. These are longer chapters, from ten to eighteen pages. Only the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is original to the book. The other two essays are found within the sermons and addresses, interviews, or books. Much of the information in "A Testament of Hope" is found within the books at the end.

Part IV includes four interviews. These are longer, from nine to thirty-eight pages. Each is a transcript of interviews conducted by others, and contributed by these interviewers. They also includes head notes by the editors or interviewers.

Part V is compiled of selections from five books written by Dr. King. The head notes provided by the editor suggest other, interesting statements from Dr. King, but those chapters are not included in this book. Only those chapters that follow the general themes and purpose of the book are included. Though this would significantly add to the many pages of this book, the missing chapters leave the reader with a sense of loss and a wonder what has been left out, and why it was not included.

The final section of the book is an Appendix, including an additional interview, a conversation with Martin Luther King, Jr. published in "The Conservative Judaism" in 1968. The discussion occurred just ten days before Dr. King's assassination. This interview comprised twenty-four pages of questions from a group of rabbis and answers from Dr. King.

The book is considered "essential writings" and the editor obviously was required to omit interesting portions of Dr. King's writings. The writings and speeches become repetitious, causing the reader to become tired of the constant reiteration of ideas. This must have been an overwhelming project, and the editor is to be congratulated on his efforts. However, some of the included chapters could well have been eliminated, or shortened. If the books were considered essential, they may have better covered the essential ideas and ideals of Dr. King without the redundancy of the early chapters.

Quotes

"This love might well be the salvation of our civilization. This is why I am so impressed with our motto for the week, 'Freedom and Justice through Love.' Not through violence; not through hate; no, not even through boycotts; but through love," (p. 140).

"We must face the tragic fact that the federal government is the nation's highest investor in segregation," (p. 153).

"Marching feet announce that time has come for a given idea. When the idea is a sound one, the cause a just one, and the demonstration a righteous one, change will be forthcoming. But if any of these conditions are not present, the power for change is missing also," (p. 59).

"There is no easy way to create a world where men and women can live together, where each has his own job and house and where all children receive as much education as their minds can absorb. But if such a world is created in our lifetime, it will be done in the United States by Negroes and white people of good will. It will be accomplished by persons who have the courage to put an end to suffering by willingly suffering themselves rather than inflict suffering upon others. It will be done by rejecting racism, materialism and violence that has characterized Western civilization and especially by working toward a world of brotherhood, cooperation and peace," (p. 61).

"In their relations with the Negroes, white people discovered that they had rejected the very center of their own ethical professions. They could not face the triumph of their lesser instincts and simultaneously have peace within. And so, to gain it, they rationalized—insisting that the unfortunate Negro, being less than human, deserved and even enjoyed second-class status," (p. 75).

"The extreme tension in race relations in the South today is explained in part by the revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of himself and of his destiny and his determination to struggle for justice. We Negroes have replaced self-pity with self-respect and self-depreciation with dignity," (p. 76).

"This is the ultimate tragedy of segregation. It not only harms one physically, but it injures one spiritually. It scars the soul and distorts the personality. It inflicts the segregator with a false sense of superiority while inflicting the segregated with a false sense of inferiority," (p. 85).

"If the American Negro and other victims of oppression succumb to the temptation of using violence in the struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and their chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos," (p. 86).

"Victor Hugo once said that there is nothing more powerful in all the world than an idea whose time has come.

"Anyone sensitive to the present moods, morals, and trends in our nation, must know that the time for racial justice has come. The issue is not whether segregation and discrimination will be eliminated but how they will pass from the American scene," (p. 99).

"We will take direct action against injustice without waiting for other agencies to act. We will not obey unjust laws or submit to unjust practices. We will do this peacefully, openly, cheerfully because our aim is to persuade. We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with our words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts. We will always be willing to talk and seek fair compromise, but we are ready to suffer when necessary and even risk our lives to become witnesses to the truth as we see it," (p. 103).

"The tragedy of segregation is that it treats men as means rather than ends, and thereby reduces them to things rather than persons," (p. 119).

"...he who openly disobeys a law, a law conscience tells him is unjust, and then willingly accepts the penalty, gives evidence thereby that he so respects that law that he belongs in jail until it is changed. Their appeal is to the conscience," (pp. 164-5).

"Legislative enactments, like court decisions, declare rights, but do not automatically deliver them," (p. 172).

"We are going to bring a voting bill into being in the streets of Selma. President Johnson has a mandate from the American people. He must go out and get a voting bill this time that will end the necessity for any more voting bills," (p. 187).

"The cohesive, potentially explosive Negro community in the North has a short fuse and a long train of abuses. Those who argue that it is hazardous to give warnings, lest the expression of apprehension lead to violence, are in error. Violence has already been practiced too often, and always because remedies were postponed. It is now the task of responsible people to indicate where and why spontaneous combustion is accumulating," (p. 193).

"This will be the day when we shall bring into full realization the American dream—a dream yet unfilled. A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of human personality—that is the dream," (p. 206).

"Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours," (p. 238).

"Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism," (p. 238).

"But we will never have peace in the world until men everywhere recognize that ends are not cut off from means, because the means represent the ideal in the making, and the end in process, and ultimately you can't reach good ends through evil means, because the means represent the seed and the end represents the tree," (p. 255).

"In these trying circumstances, the black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws—racism, poverty, militarism and materialism. It is exposing evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced," (p. 315).

"I think the aroused conscience of many, many white people all over the country, the growing awareness of religious institutions that they have not done their job, and the determination of the Negro himself, and the growing industrialization in the South—all of these things, I believe—will conjoin to make it possible for us to move on toward the goal of integration," (p. 339).



"Though he spoke with heartfelt and often eloquent sincerity, his tone was one of businesslike detachment. And his mood, except for one or two flickering smiles of irony, was gravely serious—never more so than the moment, during a rare evening with his family on our first night in town, when his four children chided him affectionately for 'not being home enough,'" (p. 341).

"The church once changed society. It was then a thermostat of society. But today I feel that too much of the church is merely a thermometer, which measures rather than molds popular opinion," (p. 345).

"...nonviolence is a weapon fabricated of love. It is a sword that heals," (pp. 349-50).

"It is now necessary for all to see that a destructive minority can poison the wellsprings from which the majority must drink, and so it is necessary for the nation as a whole to rise up now and find answers to the deep social problem," (p. 396).

"...eventually the up of endurance runs over, and the human personality cries out, 'I can take it no more,'" (p. 424).

"Nonviolent resistance had emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and the motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method," (p. 447).

"'This may well be' I said, 'the darkest hour just before dawn. We have moved all of these months with the daring faith that God was with us in our struggle. The many experiences of days gone by have vindicated that faith in a most unexpected manner. We must go out with the same faith, the same conviction. We must believe that a way will be made out of no way,'" (p. 455).

"On a particular Monday evening, following a tension-packed week which included being arrested and receiving numerous threatening telephone calls, I spoke at a mass meeting. I attempted to convey an overt impression of strength and courage, although I was inwardly depressed and fear-stricken. At the end of the meeting, Mother Pollard came to the front of the church and said, 'Come here, son.' I immediately went to her and hugged her affectionately. 'Something is wrong with you,' she said. 'You didn't talk strong tonight.' Seeking further to disguise my fears, I retorted, 'Oh, no, Mother Pollard, nothing is wrong. I am feeling as fine as ever.' But her insight was discerning. 'Now you can't fool me,' she said. 'I knows something is wrong. It is that we ain't doing things to please you? Or is it that the white folks is bothering you?' Before I could respond, she looked directly into my eyes and said, 'I don't told you we is with you all the way.' Then her face became radiant and she said in words of quiet certainty, 'But even if we ain't with you, God's gonna take care of you.' As she spoke these consoling words, everything in me quivered and quickened with the pulsing tremor of raw energy," (p. 517).

"We did not hesitate to call our movement an army. But it was a special army, with no supplies but its sincerity, no uniform but its determination, no arsenal except its faith, no

currency but its conscience. It was an army that would move but not maul. It was an army that would sing but not slay. It was an army that would flank but not falter. It was an army to storm bastions of hatred, to lay siege to the fortresses of discrimination. It was an army whose allegiance was to God and whose strategy and intelligence were the eloquently simple dictates of conscience," (p. 536).

Topics for Discussion

The nonviolent philosophy developed by Martin Luther King, Jr. was compared early to the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi. He often discussed the influence of Gandhi in his efforts. In what ways did Gandhi influence the philosophy and efforts of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement?

Segregation affected both black and white people. Dr. King often called segregation a tragedy. In what ways did he call segregation a tragedy? Are there similar situations to segregation in our society today that act similarly as tragedies?

Nonviolent protest actions were the catalyst for many changes in the lives of people in the South. In what ways did these actions move people to change their actions and their attitudes? What was different about these nonviolent actions from other efforts to create change?

Dr. King noted that many of his followers had suffered and that many more would suffer. In what ways did he justify the suffering and death of so many who participated in nonviolent protest?

Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement were often asked to "slow down and let time work" to achieve the changes that the movement was struggling to create. What was Dr. King's response to this demand? In what ways is time positive or negative?

Many times the nonviolent protesters broke laws in an effort to magnify the injustices of the system. What justification was used to break laws when the organization was attempting to force obedience to law? What is the difference between a moral and immoral law? What laws do you perceive to be immoral today? What makes them immoral?

Dr. King often charges the federal government with support for segregation. He also indicates that the government could do much more to implement integration. In what ways did the federal government support segregation? In what ways did he declare that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson could more effectively eliminate segregation and implement integration?

The ultimate goal of the Human Rights Movement was integration. What did Dr. King deem to be integration? Why is integration important to create a unified community? Would Dr. King consider the United States to be sufficiently integrated today? What reason would you give for that answer?

While interred in Birmingham Jail, Dr. King responds to a critical letter from a group of Alabama clergymen. In this, and other chapters, Dr. King speaks of a disappointment with white clergy as a whole. What caused that disappointment? When did he say was the most segregated hour of the week? Would Dr. King continue to be disappointed by these same things today? Why or why not?

Many followers of nonviolent action turned away to violence, including rioting. Though not supporting these actions, Dr. King enumerated several underlying reasons for young people to turn to violence. What are these reasons? Are these underlying reasons still present in America?

Black Power was seen by Dr. King as essentially a negative term, though he also saw positive use to the term. What are the positive and negative values connected to Black Power? Which is strongest, the negative or positive values? Why?

Martin Luther King was always described as hopeful for a positive future. He wrote an essay about hope. What reasons did he give for this hope? In what ways are those reasons still valid?

Dr. King was often rebuked for his stance against the war in Vietnam. In what ways did he see that war to be destructive to the black and the poor people of America?

In his arguments against the War in Vietnam, Dr. King noted that the United States was losing respect among other nations of the world. What were his reasons for this argument? Would these arguments be effective in arguing against the current battles the United States is involved in across the world?

The most difficult right to gain in the south was that of the right to vote. This is the most important and necessary right needed by citizens of the United States. In what ways is voting important to freedom and justice? In what ways would freedom and justice be improved if all who are able participated in that right?