serve to meet a real need in the life of the church. It will be possible now for each
member to have the opportunity to keep abreast with all of the activities of the
church. Naturally, there are vital things happening in the experiences of mem-
bers as well as in the church program generally which time will not permit to be
mentioned at the regular Sunday service. Such vital information is now released
through our official organ. Each of us owes a real debt of gratitude to the very
competent editor of the ECHO and the fine staff.

Now, to change the subject a bit. As you know, we are presently in the summer
phase of our work and our church life. All too often this is a period in which
church activities and church interest fall hopelessly off. This should not be the
case. The church must operate in the summer as well as in the winter; so I am
urging each member to remember his church responsibilities for the remaining
weeks of the summer period. If you find it necessary to be away for a few weeks,
remember that the church needs your pledge to continue to meet its financial
obligations.

Many commendable things have already happened in the church this summer.
We have just closed a baby contest which proved to be a tremendous success.
Once again Dexter proved what power there is in a group of people dedicated to
the program of the church. For everything which you did, we are exceedingly
grateful.

In a few weeks, each member will be asked to make a pledge toward the fund
for the general renovation of the church (downstairs auditorium) and the par-
sonage. I am sure that we can expect the cooperation of the entire membership
in this venture. Each member will be urged to pledge at least ten dollars toward
this effort and can extend payments over a three-month period. Let us prove
once again the power of a dedicated congregation. I am sure that we can do it,
just as we have done it so often before!

TD. Dexter Echo, 18 July 1956, pp. 1, 2; copy in MLKP-MBU: Box 77.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

“Non-Aggression Procedures to
Interracial Harmony,” Address Delivered
at the American Baptist Assembly and
American Home Mission Agencies Conference

[23 July 1956]
Green Lake, Wisc.

In this address to executives of the Home Mission Societies of Christian Friends,
sponsored by the American Baptist Assembly, King responds to the question “How will
the oppressed peoples of the world wage their struggle against the forces of injustice?”
Dismissing the use of violence as “both impractical and immoral,” he endorses the
method of nonviolent protest. This “mentally and spiritually aggressive” technique not
only avoids “external physical violence” but also “seeks to avoid internal violence to
the spirit. He delivered the same speech on 16 October to the 131st Universalist
Convention in Courtland, New York; it was edited for publication in the organization’s
Thank you very much for your kindness, Dr. Diamond, executives of the Home Mission Societies of Christian Friends. I need not pause to say how happy I am to be here this evening and to be a part of this very rich fellowship. I consider this a unique privilege as well as a unique honor and I certainly want to express my personal appreciation to the executives of the Home Mission Societies for extending the invitation. I assure you that I am very happy to be here. I didn't know that I would run into so many old friends in coming to Green Lake, so that all of this served to increase my interest and my stay here and to make the fellowship even richer. I am more than happy to be a part of this very rich assembly, and I am very proud to be a Baptist when I can see something like this.

Our subject for the evening, as you will notice it on the programs, is Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony. Now what I will be talking about, if I can break that down a little bit, is the technique of nonviolence in bringing about better race relations. Nonviolence as a technique in bringing about better race relations. It is impossible to look out into the broad arena of American life without noticing a real crisis in race relations. This crisis has been precipitated on the one hand by the determined resistance on the part of reactionary elements in the South to the Supreme Court's momentous decision on segregation.\(^2\) It has been precipitated on the other hand by the radical change in the Negro's evaluation of himself. And it is impossible to understand the tension in race relations without understanding this revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of his nature and destiny.\(^3\)

A brief survey of the history of the Negro in America reveals this change in terms that are crystal clear. It was in the year 1619 that the first Negro slaves landed on the shores of this nation. They were brought here from the soils of Africa and, unlike the pilgrim fathers who landed at Plymouth a year later, they were brought here against their wills. For more than two hundred years, Africa was raped and plundered, her native kingdoms disorganized, her people and rulers demoralized, and the whole continent inflicted with pains and burdens hardly paralleled by any race of people in the whole history of the civilized world.\(^4\) Throughout slavery the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was not a person to be respected but a thing to be used. He was merely a depersonalized cog in a vast plantation machine. The famous Dred Scott decision of 1857 well...
illustrates the status of the Negro during slavery. For it was in this decision that the Supreme Court of this nation said, in substance, that the Negro is not a citizen of the United States, he is merely property subject to the dictates of his owner, and this was the attitude that prevailed throughout slavery. With the growth of slavery it became necessary to give some defense for it. It seems to be a fact of life that human beings cannot continue to do wrong without eventually reaching out for some rationalization and to cover up an obvious wrong with the beautiful garments of righteousness.\(^5\)

William James, a psychologist, used to talk a great deal about the stream of consciousness, and he said one of the uniqueness of human nature is that man has the capacity and the ability to temporarily block the stream of consciousness and inject anything in it that he wants to. And so man has the unique and tragic power of justifying the rightness of the wrong. This is exactly what happened to the slave owners. They fell victim to the danger that forever confronts religion. That is the danger that religion and the Bible, not properly interpreted, can be used as instruments to crystallize a status quo. This was the thing that often happened, and so from pulpits all over the nation certain ideas went out. It was argued that the Negro was inferior by nature because of Noah’s curse upon the children of Ham, and Paul’s command became a watchword: “Servants be obedient to your masters.” \(^6\) And then one of the brethren had probably read some of the logic of Aristotle, and he could put his argument almost in the form of an Aristotelian syllogism. He could say a man is made in the image of God; and then comes his minor premise: God, as everybody knows, is not a Negro; and then the conclusion: therefore, the Negro is not a man. \([\text{laughter}\] Now this was the type of reasoning that prevailed at that time.\(^7\)

With all of this, living under this, the Negro came to the point of losing faith in himself. He came to feel that perhaps he was less than human. The great tragedy of physical slavery was that it led to the paralysis of mental slavery. And so long as the Negro accepted this place assigned to him a sort of racial peace existed, but it was an uneasy peace in which the Negro was forced patiently to accept injustice and oppression and exploitation. It was a negative peace, for real peace is not merely the absence of some negative force—tension, confusion, or law—but real peace is the presence of some positive force—justice, goodwill, and brotherhood. So that this was merely a negative peace.

But then one day something happened to the Negro. He traveled a great deal. He had been to war and he had seen a lot of things. Literacy was fastly coming

\(^5\) The three preceding sentences do not appear in “Non-violent Procedures”; instead the following statements appear: “After his emancipation in 1863, the Negro still confronted oppression and inequality. It is true that for a time, while the Army of Occupation remained in the South and Reconstruction ruled, the Negro had a brief period of eminence and political power. But he was quickly overwhelmed by the white majority. So in 1896, through the Plessy v. Ferguson Decision, a new kind of slavery came into being covered up with certain \([\text{niceties}]\) of complexity. In this decision the Supreme Court of the nation established the doctrine of separate-but-equal as the law of the land. Following this decision there was a strict enforcement of the ‘separate’ with not the slightest intention to abide by the equal. So the Plessy Doctrine ended up plunging the Negro across the abyss of exploitation where he experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice.”

\(^6\) Ephesians 6:5.

\(^7\) This paragraph does not appear in “Non-violent Procedures.”
into being and illiteracy passing away, and all of these things came together and
to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses all over began to
reevaluate themselves. The Negro came to feel that he was somebody. His reli-
igion revealed to him that God loves all of his children, and at bottom, the basic
thing about a man is not “his specificity but his fundamentum.” And so he came
to the point that he could agree with the eloquent poet:

Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit Nature’s claims
Skin may differ but affection
Dwells in black and white the same.
If I were so tall as to reach the pole
Or to grasp at the ocean at a span,
I must be measured by my soul,
The mind is the standard of the man.8

With this new self-respect and this new sense of dignity, the negative peace of
the South was gradually undermined. And the tension which we notice the day,
today, in the area of race relations can be explained by this revolutionary change
in the Negro’s evaluation of his nature and destiny and his determination to
struggle and sacrifice until the sagging worlds of segregation have been finally
crushed by the battering rams of rugged justice. This is the meaning of the whole
危机.

Now this determination on the part of the Negro to struggle and to struggle,
until segregation and discrimination have passed away, springs from the same
longing for human dignity that motivates oppressed peoples all over the world.
This is not only a nation in transition, but this is a world in transition. There are
approximately two billion four hundred million people in this world, and the vast
majority of these people live in Asia and Africa. More than one billion five hun-
dred million of the people of the world live on these two continents—six hun-
dred million in China, four hundred million in India and Pakistan, two hundred
million in Africa, a hundred million in Indonesia, and about eighty-six million in
Japan, and all of these people constitute more than one billion five hundred
million of the people of the world; and over the years most of these people have
lived under the pressing yoke of some foreign power. They have been exploited
economically, dominated politically, segregated and humiliated by some other
power, but now they are gradually gaining their freedom. And there is a deter-
mination on the part of people, oppressed people, all over the world to gain this
freedom and this human dignity, so that the struggle of the Negro is a part of this
great struggle all over the world. It’s a struggle on the part of oppressed peoples
in general and the Negro in America, in particular. It is not something that will

8. These lines are a composite of passages from William Cowper’s “The Negro’s Complaint” (1788)
and Isaac Watts’s “False Greatness” (1706). See note 5 to “The ’New Negro’ of the South: Behind the
Montgomery Story,” June 1956, p. 283 in this volume. This passage does not appear in “Non-violent
Procedures.” King stated instead: “His religion revealed to him that God loves all his children, and
that the important thing about a man ‘is not his specificity but his fundamentum,’ not the texture of
his hair or the color of his skin, but the texture and quality of his soul.”
suddenly disappear. Realism impels us to admit that the struggle will continue until justice becomes a reality.

But the great question, the basic question, in the face of all of this is this question: How will the struggle be waged? How will the oppressed peoples of the world wage their struggle against the forces of injustice, the forces of oppression? And there are two basic answers to this question. One is to resort to the conventional methods of violence and hatred. We all know the danger of this method. Violence creates many more problems than it solves. And the oppressed peoples of the world cannot afford to flirt with retaliatory violence. And there is a voice crying through the vista of time saying, “He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.” And history is replete with the bleached bones of nations who refused to listen to the words of Jesus at this point. The method of violence would be both impractical and immoral. If this method becomes widespread, it will lead to terrible bloodshed, and that aftermath will be a bitterness that will last for generations. So we must all pray and hope and work that the oppressed peoples of the world will not use the method of violence to stand out against oppression and injustice.

There is another method which can serve as an alternative to the method of violence, and it is a method of nonviolent resistance. This is an important method, a significant method, and it is a method that I would like to recommend, a method that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. There are several basic things that we can say about this method of nonviolent resistance, this technique of nonviolence, and these things are basic, these things are important, and understanding this method and this technique in confronting the problems of discrimination and of segregation and standing out against the forces of injustice. The first thing that can be said about this method is that it is not a method of submission or surrender. And there are those who would argue that this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity, and so it is not a proper method to use. But that is not true of the nonviolent method. The nonviolent resister is just as opposed to the evil that he is protesting against as a violent resister. Now it is true that this method is nonaggressive and passive in the sense that the nonviolent resister does not use physical aggression against his opponent. But at the same time the mind and the emotions are active, actively trying to persuade the opponent to change his ways and to convince him that he is mistaken and to lift him to a higher level of existence. This method is nonaggressive physically, but it is aggressive spiritually. It is passive physically, but it is active mentally and spiritually. So that the first thing about the method of passive resistance, or the method of nonviolent resistance, is that it is not a method of surrender, or a weapon, or a method of submission, but it is a method that is very active in seeking to change conditions, and even though it is passive it is still resisting.

23 July 1956

9. In the article King added: “It is also sociologically true that privileged classes rarely ever give up their privileges without strong resistance. It is also sociologically true that once oppressed people rise up against their oppression there is no stopping point short of victory.” He also did not provide the numerical breakdown of the world’s colonized population.

10. Matthew 26:52.
There is another basic point about this technique of passive resistance, and it is this: That this method, in this method, the nonviolent resister seeks to lift or rather to change the opponent, to redeem him. He does not seek to defeat him or to humiliate him. And I think this is very important, that the end is never merely to protest but the end is reconciliation. And there is never the purpose behind—this method is never to defeat or to humiliate the opponent. Now the method of violence seeks to humiliate and to defeat the opponents, and therefore it leads to bitterness. The aftermath of the method of violence is bitterness. But the method of nonviolence seeks not to humiliate and not to defeat the oppressor, but it seeks to win his friendship and his understanding, and thereby and therefore the aftermath of this method is reconciliation.11

We must come to see, and all of those who struggle against injustice must come to see it, that the tension at bottom is not between races. As I like to say in Montgomery, the tension in Montgomery is not between seventy thousand white people and fifty thousand Negroes. The tension is at bottom a tension between justice and injustice. It is a tension between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. And if there is a victory, it will not be a victory merely for fifty thousand Negroes. If there is a victory for integration in America, it will not be a victory merely for sixteen million Negroes, but it will be a victory for justice, a victory for goodwill, a victory for democracy. And so the aim must always be to defeat injustice and not to defeat the persons who are involved in it. This method of nonviolence seeks to win the friendship and the understanding of the opponent, rather than to defeat him or to humiliate him.

Another basic factor in the method of nonviolent resistance is that this method does not seek merely to avoid external physical violence, but it seeks to avoid internal violence of spirit. And at the center of the method of nonviolence stands the principle of love. Love is always the regulating ideal in the technique, in the method of nonviolence. This is the point at which the nonviolent resister follows the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for it is this love ethic that stands at the center of the Christian faith. And this stands as the regulating ideal for any move or for any struggle to change conditions of society.12

Now I realize that to talk about love can be something very sentimental. I realize that it can end up as empty words. It's very easy to say, “Love your oppressor.” It's very easy to say, “Love your enemy.” It's very easy to say, “Pray for those that despitefully use you.” But it can be empty talk unless we understand the real meaning of this love.13 Now we all know, we must be frank enough to admit that you cannot love your enemy or your oppressor like you love your personal friends, or like you love your wife, or your husband. And I don't think it means that. That is not the meaning of love at this point.

11. In the article King added: “The aftermath of non-violence is the creation of the beloved community.”
12. In “Non-violent Procedures” King replaced these three sentences with: “In struggling for human dignity the Negro must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethics of love to the center of our lives.”
13. The four preceding sentences do not appear in “Non-violent Procedures.”
The Greek helps us out a great deal. It talks about love in several senses. It talks about *eros*. And *eros* is a significant type of love, *eros* is a sign of aesthetic love. Plato talks about this love a great deal in his dialogue with Phaedrus. It is, it boils down to a romantic love. It is craving for something, and it has with it a bit of affection, an affectionate feeling.

And then there is another type of love that we talk about a great deal, it’s a love that we have for personal friends. The Greek talks about it in *philia*. And it is a type of love, it stands on the basis of reciprocity. It has with it that mutual taint; it loves because it is loved. But then the Greek comes out with something higher, something that is strong, something that is more powerful than *eros* or any other type of love. It talks about *agape*, and *agape* is understanding goodwill for all men. *Agape* seeks nothing in return. It is a redemptive love. It is a love of God working within men. And so when men move to the point of *agape*, they love not because the individuals are so wealthy to them, not because it’s anything they like so much about the individuals, but they love them because God loves them. They love them because they are wealthy to God, and this is the meaning of *agape*. It is a love that loves a person that does a evil deed, while hating the deed that the person does. And this is the type of love that can redeem. It is a transforming love. And this is the type of love that we talk about, and that we are supposed to live about in this method of nonviolent resistance. It is a love that can change individuals. It can change nations. It can change conditions.

Well I cannot close without mentioning another aspect of the method of nonviolence. Another thing that goes along with this method, a basic belief that goes along with it. And it is the belief that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has great faith in the future. And there is a belief that, at bottom, *justice* will triumph in the universe over all of the forces of injustice. People are frequently asking me and people in Montgomery: How is it that we continue to move on and continue to walk after seven or eight months? How is it that we continue to burn out our automobile tires and keep going amid all of the tension? Well, my wife answered the question a few days ago in a matter quite satisfactory to me. One reporter was asking her how it was that she remained so calm in the midst of all of the pressure of the situation, how she was able to keep moving in the midst of all of the tension and constant flux. And I never will forget her words, “We believe we are right, and in believing that we are right, we believe that God is with us.” And that is the answer, that is the answer that eventually comes to the aid of the passive resister.

We have the strange feeling down in Montgomery that in our struggle for justice we have cosmic companionship. And so we can walk and never get weary, because we believe and know that there is a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice. And this belief, and this feeling that God is on the side of truth and justice and love and that they will eventually reign supreme in this universe, this comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something that stands at the center of our faith. There is a great epic. There is a great event that stands at the center of our faith which reveals to us that God is on the side of truth and love and justice. It says to us that Good Friday

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14. This line is from the spiritual “There Is a Great Meeting in the Promised Land.”
may occupy the throne for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumph
and beat of the drums of Easter. It says that evil may so shape events that Caesar
will occupy the palace and Christ the cross, but one day that same Christ will rise
up and split history into A.D. and B.C. so that even the life of Caesar must be dated
by his name. There is something in this universe that justifies Carlyle in saying,
“No lie can live forever.” There is something in this universe that justifies William
Cullen Bryant in saying, “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” And there is
something in this universe that justifies James Russell Lowell in saying, “Truth
forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways a
future, and behind the dim unknown stands God within the shadow keeping
watch above his own.” 15 And this is what the method of nonviolent resistance
says to the individual engaged in the struggle. And this is why the nonviolent
resister can suffer and not retaliate, because he has this strong faith in the future.
This is a method, this is a technique, and this is a procedure. It is not at all without
precedent. A brown man tried it in India. He looked over at the powerful British
empire and he noticed all over vast and intricate military machinery. And in the
midst of looking at all of this, something said to him—and he said to himself,
“We cannot use this method.” And so he decided to confront physical force with
an even greater force, namely soul force. And this brown man, Mahatma Gandhi,
was able to free his people from the political domination and the economic ex-
plotation inflicted upon them by Britain. And so those four hundred million
people stand out today with their freedom through the method

And God grant that we will continue to move on all men of goodwill, and all
those who are confronted with oppression in this world will move on with this
method. Not with the method of violence, not with the method of retaliatory
violence, not with any method that seeks to retaliate, but the method that seeks
to redeem. And whenever we decide to do this, we will be able to emerge from
the bleak and desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man and to the bright
and glittering daybreak of justice and freedom and brotherhood for all people.
God bless you. [applause]

At. ABAC-ABHSP.

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15. See a discussion of these passages in note 8 to “The Death of Evil upon the Seashore,” 17 May
1956, p. 260 in this volume.

From Septima Poinsette Clark

30 July 1956
Monteagle, Tenn.

In the spring of 1956 Clark had been fired as a public school teacher in Columbia,
South Carolina, when she refused to resign from the NAACP, as required by a new state