violence in action should not be interpreted as a denigration of the spiritual values
which must be present if non-violence is to work at all. Let me cite just one case in
point: In Montgomery, crime among Negroes declined markedly during the course
of the boycott. There was no organized campaign in this direction. What happened
was that the very presence of a sense of social mission and human brotherhood
worked tremendous changes in the personal lives of those involved. Thus, even when
non-violence is accepted as a practical means, an instrument, it has profound spir-
itual consequences, it leads toward the consideration of non-violence as a principle.

A Visionary Struggle

But there is an even larger dimension to non-violence and it is with this point
that I wish to close. When Negroes involve themselves in such a struggle, they take
a radical step. Their rejection of hatred and oppression in the specific situation
cannot be confined to a single issue. For it raises the question of hatred and op-
pression in the society as a whole, it moves toward an even deeper commitment
to a pervasive social change. For out of this one problem, the sense of brother-
hood springs as a practical necessity, and once this happens, there is revealed the
vision of a society of brotherhood. We seek new ways of human beings living to-
gether, free from the spiritual deformation of race hatred—and free also from
the deformations of war and economic injustice. And this vision does not belong
to Negroes alone. It is the yearning of mankind.

PD. Challenge, 1 February 1959, p. 3; copy in NNU-T.

Address at the Thirty-sixth Annual
Dinner of the War Resisters League

[2 February 1959]
[New York, N.Y.]

In this typed draft, King embellishes some of his standard remarks on nonviolence with
a call for an end to war and an affirmation of the link between social justice at home
and peace abroad: “No sane person can afford to work for social justice within the na-
tion unless he simultaneously resists war and clearly declares himself for non-violence
in international relations.” He concludes with the hope that, through adherence to non-
vioence, “the colored peoples” would so “challenge the nations of the world that they will
seriously seek an alternative to war and destruction.” The War Resisters League’s news-
letter reported that this event, held in honor of pacifist A. J. Muste, was the “most widely
attended WRL dinner in recent years.”1 The following day, King departed for India.

1. “Martin Luther King Addresses WRL Dinner,” WRL News, March–April 1959; see also War Re-
sisters League, Program, “Thirty-sixth annual dinner,” 2 February 1959. The War Resisters League,
founded in 1923, emerged out of opposition to World War I. In 1956 Bayard Rustin, executive sec-
retary of the WRL, arrived in Montgomery to offer assistance in the early days of the bus boycott.
I bring warm greetings from the embattled South—from 50,000 Negroes of
Montgomery, Alabama, from the S.C.L.C., uniting Negro leadership in 12 southern
states representing the millions of Americans not yet recipients of the rights
guaranteed in their own Constitution. I also bring greetings from your friends,
and my colleagues, who keep an [the] heroic struggle going regardless of its cost
to them personally. Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth of Birmingham, Mr. A. S. Howard
of Bessemer, who only last week was brutally beaten by a mob while leaving a court
house.² Your sympathy and support mean a great deal to the fearless men who live
daily with terror, and resist it with non-violent power and determination.

I would not want you to feel that the pressures which surround southern resis-
tance leaders obscure the positive gains our harassed movement is making. This
week marks a turning point in our struggle. The defeat of massive resistance in
Virginia is the Gettysburg of today.³ Gov. [J. Lindsay] Almond with his army of po-
litical forces has had his lines broken, and has tasted defeat. This is significant be-
cause their resistance was total, but met its match in the total and active resistance
of our forces. It was not alone expressions of good will from white moderates which
weakened their ranks. Nor alone was it the legal manipulations and the success-
ful utilization of court orders.

In Virginia Negroes themselves took into their own hands through direct ac-
tion, the mobilizing of public opinion. CORE, NAACP, Ministers, and labor, or-
ganized and conducted a March on the State Capitol in Richmond on January 1.⁴

Earlier in October the S.C.L.C brought to Norfolk Negro leaders from all over the
South for a two day conference on non-violence. Though I was scheduled to be
the leading [principle] speaker my confinement in the hospital made this impos-
sible, but your A. J. Muste took my place and deepened in his inimitable fashion
the thinking of our leaders on non-violence.⁵ At the conclusion of this conference
over 4000 of the Negro citizens of Norfolk jammed the City Auditorium: the first
demonstration of such numbers in the city’s history, thus dramatizing the dynamic
involvement of the community in this struggle. The whole press of Virginia front-
paged this event making it unmistakably clear that the Negro of Virginia was not
waiting submissively or passively for his rights to be handed to him.⁶ I have re-
peatedly warned my people that victory would not come if they wait for the white
people to furnish the dinner while they merely furnish the appetite. The significant

2. Shuttleworth was founder of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR)
and co-founder of SCLC. Howard was a Birmingham-area black labor leader. For more about Howard,
see Statement Adopted at Spring Session of SCLC in Tallahassee, Florida, 15 May 1959, pp. 205–208
in this volume.

3. On 19 January, efforts to avoid integration by closing schools were frustrated by decisions from
439, 106 S.E. 2d 636 [1959], and Ruth Pendleton James et al. v. J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., et al., 170 F. Supp.
331 [1959]). On the day of King’s address, schools in two Virginia cities opened on an integrated ba-
sis without incident.

4. For more on the Richmond protest, see Wyatt Tee Walker to King, 16 January 1959, pp. 108–111
in this volume.

5. Muste spoke at the October 1958 SCLC conference in Norfolk while King recuperated from the
stabbing. For more on Muste’s address, see SCLC, Minutes, Fall meeting, 2 October 1958.

6. See for example, “Non-Violent Protest Set on Schools,” Richmond News Leader, 1 January 1959,
victory in Virginia illustrates that this lesson was learned and the fruits of active struggle, as always, is victory.

Not only in the South, but throughout the nation and the world, we live in an age of conflict, an age of biological weapons, chemical warfare, atomic fallout and nuclear bombs. It is a period of conflict between the mammoth powers. It is an age of conformity. It is a period of uncertainty and fear. Every man, woman and child lives, not knowing if they shall see tomorrow’s sunrise.

We are in a period when men who understand the dimensions of our tragic state must be heard. We must stand up and accept the consequences of our convictions. First of all, we must resist war. With all our energy we must find our alternative to violence as a means to deal with the terrible conflicts that beset us.

We must no longer cooperate with policies that degrade man and make for war. The great need in the world today is to find the means for the social organization of the power of non-violence.

In this connection, I salute the War Resisters League, which for 36 years has courageously carried on the fight against war. I applaud its members, many of whom chose prison rather than break their faith in the power of love. Some chose to be ostracized rather than engage in the brutalization of their fellow man. You have been prophetic and, as Albert Einstein once said, "you are part of the moral elite that may yet lead mankind from self-destruction."7

As you know, the establishment of social justice in our nation is of profound concern to me. This great struggle is in the interest of all Americans and I shall not be turned from it. Yet no sane person can afford to work for social justice within the nation unless he simultaneously resists war and clearly declares himself for non-violence in international relations.

What will be the ultimate value of having established social justice in a context where all people, Negro and White, are merely free to face destruction by strontium 90 or atomic war.

If we are to find a new method to avoid such terrible possibilities, it will be based on love not hate; it will be based on reconciliation and not retaliation; it will be based on forgiveness and not on revenge.

If we are to find an alternative to war, we must re-examine the assumptions of the pacifist position:

My study of Gandhi convinced me that true pacifism is not non-resistance to evil; but non-violent resistance to evil. Between the two positions, there is a world of difference. Gandhi resisted evil with as much vigor and power as the violent resister, but he resisted with love instead of hate. True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power. [strikeout illegible] It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiples the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop

7. Einstein, a WRL member in the early 1930s, abandoned his strict pacifism following Hitler’s ascension to power in Germany; he continued to press for peace and disarmament until his death in 1955.
a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart. However bringing about such a transformation is not a simple matter. It requires directness of purpose, dedication and above all humility of mind and spirit. Because our thinking is so close, and because the task before us is so great, I feel free to say that we who believe in non-violence often have an unwarranted optimism concerning man and lean unconsciously toward self-righteousness. It seems to me that we must see the pacifist position not as sinless but as the lesser evil in the circumstances. I have often felt that we who advocate non-violence would have a greater appeal if we did not claim to be free from the moral dilemmas that the nonpacifist confronts.

Despite all shortcomings, the philosophy of non-violence played such a positive role in the Montgomery movement [southern struggle] that it may be wise to turn to a brief discussion of some basic aspects of this philosophy [non-violence] as they apply to Montgomery and may be applied to the quest for peace. First it must be emphasized that nonviolent resistance is not a method for cowards; it does resist. If one uses this method because he is afraid or merely because he lacks the instruments of violence, he is not truly nonviolent. This is why Gandhi often said that if cowardice is the only alternative to violence, it is better to fight. He made this statement conscious of the fact that there is always another alternative: no individual or group need submit to any wrong, nor need they use violence to right the wrong; there is the way of nonviolent resistance. This is ultimately the way of strong men. It is not a method of stagnant passivity. The phrase “passive resistance” often gives the false impression that this is a sort of “do nothing method” in which the resister quietly and passively accepts evil. But nothing is further from the truth. For while the nonviolent resister is passive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent, his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade his opponent that he is wrong. It is not passive non-resistance to evil; it is active nonviolent resistance to evil.

A second basic fact that characterizes nonviolence is that it does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through non-cooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that these are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

A third characteristic of this method is that the attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing the evil. It is evil that


9. In his 15 August 1920 essay “The Doctrine of the Sword,” Gandhi wrote: “I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence... I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour” (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 18, July–November 1920 [Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1965], p. 132).
the nonviolent resister seeks to defeat, not the persons victimized by evil. If he is opposing injustice, the nonviolent resister must have the vision to see the real and not the apparent antagonisms. As I have said again and again, to the people in Montgomery, "The tension is, at bottom between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. And if there is a victory, it will be a victory not merely of 50,000 Negroes, but a victory for justice and the forces of light. We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may be unjust."

A fourth point that characterizes nonviolent resistance is a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back. "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood," said Gandhi to his countrymen.10 The non-violent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it. He does not seek to dodge jail. If going to jail is necessary, he enters it "as a bridegroom enters a bride's chamber."

One may well ask: "What is the nonviolent resister’s justification for this ordeal to which he invites men, for this mass political application of the ancient doctrine of turning the other cheek?" The answer is found in the realization that unearned suffering is redemptive. Suffering, the nonviolent resister realizes, has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities. "Things of fundamental importance to people are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with their suffering," said Gandhi. He continues: "Suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut to the voice of reason.12 But beyond its effect upon the aggressor, the voluntary suffering inspires respect from the uncommitted and ultimately leads to a growth of, and solidarity with, the ranks of the peacemakers. This is the lesson of the experience of Jesus from the beginning of the modern era to the second half of the 20th century in Montgomery, Alabama.

A fifth point concerning nonviolent resistance is that it avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him. At the cen-

10. King’s discussion of Gandhi in this draft may have been drawn from civil rights attorney Harris Wofford’s address "Nonviolence and the Law," delivered at Howard University on 7 November 1957. Wofford: "‘Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom but it must be our blood,’ he said to his countrymen." For an additional version of Wofford’s address, see “Nonviolence and the Law,” Gandhi Marg 3 (January 1959): 27–35. King had also relied on Wofford in his discussion of nonviolence in Stride Toward Freedom (see Introduction in Papers 4:31–32).

11. In Gandhi’s 15 December 1921 “Young India” column, he wrote: “We must widen the gates of prisons and we must enter them as a bridegroom enters the bride’s chamber” (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 22, December 1921–March 1922 [Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1966], p. 10).

12. In 1931, Gandhi wrote: “And so, in 1920, I became a rebel. Since then the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason” (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 48, September 1931–January 1932 [Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971], p. 189).
eter of nonviolence stands the principle of love. The nonviolent resister would con-
tent that in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world
must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate cam-
paigns. To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate
in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and moral-
ity enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the
ethic of love to the center of our lives.

On the eve of my departure for India, it is particularly appropriate that I have
the privilege of being with the people who have had so long a dedicated concern
for social justice, racial equality and world peace. This is the great hour for the Ne-
gro and the other colored peoples of the world. [Let each of us go away this evening
with a new determination to stand against the evils of our day.] The challenge is
here. To become the instruments of a great idea is a privilege that history gives
only occasionally.\textsuperscript{13} Arnold Toynbee says in \textit{A Study of History} that it may be the
colored peoples who will give the new spiritual dynamic to western civilization that
it so desperately needs to survive.\textsuperscript{14} I hope this is possible: The spiritual power that
the colored peoples can radiate to the world comes from love, understanding,
goodwill, and nonviolence. It may even be possible for the colored peoples
through adherence to nonviolence, so to challenge the nations of the world that
they will seriously seek an alternative to war and destruction. In a day when Sput-
niks and Explorers dash through outer space and guided ballistic missiles are carv-
ing highways of death through the stratosphere, nobody can win a war. Today the
choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or
nonexistence. The colored peoples may be God's appeal to this age—an age drift-
ing rapidly to its doom. The eternal appeal takes the form of a warning: "All who
take the sword will perish by the sword."\textsuperscript{15}

\\textsuperscript{13} Wofford, "Nonviolence and the Law": "It is a privilege that history gives only occasionally for
men to become the instruments of a great idea."

\\textsuperscript{14} Arnold Toynbee, \textit{A Study of History}, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 219–
220. See also note 7 to "'Mother's Day in Montgomery,' by Almena Lomax," 18 May 1956, in \textit{Papers}
3:266.

\\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Matthew 26:52.

\textbf{Account by Lawrence Dunbar Reddick of Press Conference in New Delhi
on 10 February 1959}

On 3 February King departed for India from New York's Idlewild Airport in the com-
pany of his wife, Coretta, and his biographer, Alabama State College history professor
Lawrence D. Reddick. They arrived in New Delhi two days behind schedule due to a