



INTRODUCTION TO THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE: THE KINGIAN PHILOSOPHY

1. Kingian Nonviolence is an outgrowth of the tradition established by Tolstoy, Thoreau, Gandhi and the three historic peace churches; the Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers. Its distinction from these earlier nonviolent approaches is that it elevated nonviolence to become a third force in society, a social movement that transformed both the structures of society and the participants. It called forth a new level of personal and social responsibility as well as moral accountability.
2. The philosophy of Kingian Nonviolence has its roots in the collective leadership of an era as well as in Dr. King's personal pursuit of truth through his intellectual investigations and the social movements he led. For him as an individual, his philosophy was deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it was informed by his examination of other nonviolent traditions.
3. The Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence were initially described in a chapter in Dr. King's first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, published in 1958. The book was both a personal reflection on his experiences in the Montgomery Movement (1954-56) and an interpretation of its meaning for society. (. . .)
4. The Six Principles of Nonviolence establish the value base of the Kingian Philosophy. This foundation enables the practitioner of nonviolence to intervene in violent or violence-prone situations as a moral action with compassion for the people involved and as an act of community. It is this moral position on issues of human rights and responsibilities that make it possible for the larger public to respond to the movement for nonviolent social change.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE

Principle One: *Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.*

It is a positive force confronting the forces of injustice, and utilizes the righteous indignation and the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual capabilities of people as the vital force for change and reconciliation.

Principle Two: *The Beloved Community is the framework for the future.*

The nonviolent concept is an overall effort to achieve a reconciled world by raising the level of relationships among people to a height where justice prevails and persons attain their full human potential.

Principle Three: *Attack forces of evil, not persons doing evil.*

The nonviolent approach helps one analyze the fundamental conditions, policies and practices of the conflict rather than reacting to one's opponents or their personalities.

Principle Four: *Accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause to achieve the goal.* Self-chosen suffering is redemptive and helps the movement grow in a spiritual as well as a humanitarian dimension. The moral authority of voluntary suffering for a goal communicates the concern to one's own friends and community as well as to the opponent.

Principle Five: *Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence.* The nonviolent attitude permeates all aspects of the campaign. It provides mirror type reflection of the reality of the condition to one's opponent and the community at large. Specific activities must be designed to help maintain a high level of spirit and morale during a nonviolent campaign.

Principle Six: *The universe is on the side of justice.*

Truth is universal and human society and each human being is oriented to the just sense of order of the universe. The fundamental values in all of the world's great religions include the concept that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. For the nonviolent practitioner, nonviolence introduces a new moral context in which nonviolence is both the means and the end.

SIX STEPS OF KINGIAN NONVIOLENCE

Dr. King's legacy includes a six-step strategy for developing a nonviolent campaign. These steps are not necessarily linear in their application but coterminous; each continues throughout the campaign.

Each of the steps is present in every aspect of the nonviolent campaign. They are presented separately here for better understanding.

Step One: Information Gathering -- The way you determine the facts, the options for change, and the timing of pressure for raising the issue is a collective process.

Step Two: Education -- the process of developing articulate leaders, who are knowledgeable about the issues. It is directed toward the community through all forms of media about the real issues and human consequences of an unjust situation.

Step Three: Personal Commitment -- looking at your internal and external involvement in the nonviolent campaign and preparing yourself for long-term as well as short-term action.

Step Four: Negotiation -- the art of bringing together your views and those of your opponent to arrive at a just conclusion or clarify the unresolved issues, at which point, the conflict is formalized.

Step Five: Direct Action occurs when negotiations have broken down or failed to produce a just response to the contested issues and conditions.

Step Six: Reconciliation -- the mandatory closing step of a campaign, when the opponents and proponents celebrate the victory and provide joint leadership to implement change.

We often view the Six Steps as phases or cycles of a campaign rather than steps because each of them embodies a cluster or series of activities related to each of the other five elements.

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Contact Matt Guynn at mguynn@OnEarthPeace.org to follow up today's presentation and for information about ongoing Kingian Nonviolence training programs.