

Invitation to 40 Days of Nonviolence:
Joining Martin Luther King, Jr. in following Jesus in Daily Life

Each day for the next 40 days, you are invited to ...

- 1) Read the *Commitment Card* Dr. King asked people to sign, and choose one of the ten commitments you'd like to practice in a special way as you follow Jesus today. (Sign it below each day, if you desire.)
- 2) Read John 1:38-39 "*When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.*" Close your eyes, and hear Jesus asking you what you are looking for? Listen for his reply and his personal invitation to "Come and see." Let the Spirit of God guide your imagination into a vision of where Jesus is staying & what it might mean to remain with Christ this day. [Choose a new Biblical text when you desire.]
- 3) Conclude by doing one of the daily practices (pgs. 3-4) or reviewing the Four Step CARA process (pgs. 5-6) & deciding how you can practice it with all people, especially any with whom you are in conflict.

Commitment Card¹ (written by Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963)

I hereby pledge myself—my person and body—to the nonviolent movement. Therefore I will keep the following ten commandments:

1. Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
2. Remember always that the non—violent movement seeks justice and reconciliation — not victory.
3. Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love.
4. Pray daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.
5. Sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men might be free.
6. Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
7. Seek to perform regular service for others and for the world.
8. Refrain from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
9. Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
10. Follow the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.

I sign this pledge, having seriously considered what I do and with the determination and will to persevere.

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Nearest Relative _____ Address _____

Besides demonstrations, I could also help the movement by: (Circle the proper items)
Run errands, Drive my car, Fix food for volunteers, Clerical work, Make phone calls, Answer phones, Mimeograph, Type, Print Signs, Distribute leaflets.

ALABAMA CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Birmingham Affiliate of S.C.L.C., 505 1/2 North 17th Street
F.L. Shuttlesworth, President

¹ From the Website *TeachingAmericanHistory.org*. Accessed at the following link on 1/14/2014:
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/commitment-card/>

SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE²

Fundamental tenets of Dr. King's philosophy of nonviolence described in his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*. The six principles include:

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **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.

² Accessed at *The King Center* website on 1/14/2014: <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub2>

Daily Practices for Nonviolent Living³

Practices

Creative nonviolence is a process of bringing us back to our truest selves. Ultimately, its techniques and strategies must draw their life from the well of sacredness within. Practically speaking, this means consciously cultivating those dimensions planted deep within our being which bring life to ourselves, to other human beings, as well as to the earth and all its inhabitants. Now more than ever, our spiritual disciplines must deepen in us the vision and methods of nonviolent transformation. To this end, we are called to cultivate the spiritual dimensions of the nonviolent life on a daily basis. Here are some spiritual qualities that lie at the foundation of a spirituality of nonviolence, with some suggestions for practicing them.

Centering

There is a spiritual tradition that says that the truth of our being lies in the center of our spiritual hearts, located a little to the right of the middle of the chest. And in order to contact this center, a cave is imagined within which a blue flame burns. As an opening ritual, let us imagine this cave within that physical position and a blue flame burning steadily and brightly inside it. Now hold on to this blue flame without allowing your mind to wander...hold on.... (Giving a few minutes to stabilize the image, the facilitator says the following prayer, asking the participants to repeat each line after it is first read):

May I dwell in the heart,
May I be healed,
May I be full of love,
May I be free from suffering,
May I be joyful and free,
May I be at peace
And discover the utter radiance
Of my own true nature.

From: Veronica Pellicaric

Awe

Often we are so absorbed in our everyday life that we assume that this is all there is. We come to believe that the structure and horizon of the world we experience—at home, in the work-place, and through the media—is “reality.” By making this assumption, we often miss the fact that this social reality is constructed—it is a system of rules, beliefs and motivations that shape and limit our view of life. We tend, therefore, to overlook the fact that life is much more mysterious and unfathomable than the systems we manufacture to navigate through the world. As Karl Rahner held, these systems are like tiny islands floating on a vast sea of mystery. When we cultivate a sense of awe for the great and irreducible mystery of our lives, we are able to see that life is more than the systems in which we live. We are also able to see that those systems can and must be transformed when they contradict or offend the great mystery that is our beginning and end.

One way of exploring this sense of mystery is to reflect on our encounters with other persons. On the one hand, these exchanges can be like following an agreed-upon formula. In that case, we are often like two billiard balls knocking against each other. On the other hand, our encounters with others can be experiences of deep communion. They can be holy moments where presence receives presence, experiences where, as phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas says in *Totality and Infinity*, there is a “flow of infinity between one another’s eyes.” When two subjects encounter one another in this way—giving but not being destroyed, belonging but not “belonging to”—they experience in a momentary but tangible way the “ground of all being,” the inexhaustible mystery which creates, preserves and embraces us.

One way of cultivating this sense of awe and mystery is to take some time in a quiet place and call to mind a very important encounter you had with another person. After imagining this event in detail, consider how it happened and what some of its consequences were. Notice your feelings as you remember this event.

³ Accessed at the *Pace e Bene: Education, Resources, and Action for Nonviolent Change* website on 1/14/2014 at: <http://paceebene.org/nonviolent-change-101/tools-nonviolent-living/nonviolent-journey/daily-practices>

Reflect on the ways that this exchange had an unpredictable quality, a sense of possibility, transcending prescribed social ritual or conventional scripts. Sense the mystery of the situation. Reflect on how this mystery comes in part from the way that the depth dimension of both people was shared. This depth dimension or inner mystery is that aspect of us that cannot be reducible to our assumptions, expectations or systems. Throughout the day, cultivate an awareness of this mystery.

Gratitude

A nonviolent stance is one of deep gratefulness for our life and for all life. It is a posture which acknowledges the source of this life. It recognizes that each one of us is on a spiritual journey and that all of our experiences—happy or sad—teach and transform us. It salutes all the ways we have been gifted. One way of cultivating gratitude is taking some time in a quiet place and recalling ten people who have given of themselves so that your life could be better. Call to mind their faces. Remember in some detail what they have done for you. Recall the ways people have lavished their time, energy and resources on you. Cultivate this awareness throughout the day, increasingly acknowledging how our entire life—and everything that passes through it—is a gift.

Receptivity

How do we cultivate our openness to those around us? One way is to practice letting go of the ego's armor in order to receive and heal the world. Here is an exercise which you can practice in the morning before leaving for work, or at any other time of the day.

Stand up, dropping your arms to your sides. Allow your entire body to relax. Breathe in the power of life; breathe it out into the world. Then slowly raise your arms and cross them in front of your eyes. Feel yourself protected and guarded. Slowly extend your arms outward in an attitude of openness to the world. After a few moments, move them in a gesture embracing the world. Repeat several times. This ritual can be performed alone or with others.

Compassion

Creative nonviolence opens us to the two fundamental dimensions of all beings: sacredness and woundedness. It teaches us to share the suffering of others, as well as their fulfillment. Active nonviolence seeks to put this form of accompaniment into practice as each opportunity arises.

One way of cultivating compassion is to imagine someone with whom you have an unresolved conflict or unresolved negative feelings. Imagine them sitting in front of you. Look into her or his eyes. Share your feelings about this conflict with this person. Then ask her or him to speak. You may want to write down the "dialogue" that unfolds between you. Finish this encounter by praying for one another. *(For more information about journal writing, see Ira Progoff's At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal Process [New York: Dialogue House Library, 1975]).*

Joy

The horrors of this world are often overwhelming. Though these are not to be ignored, awe, gratitude, receptivity and compassion demand nothing less than engaging them fully. Horror is not the ultimate reality. Creative nonviolence is a spiritual path that cultivates a keen awareness that the meaning of life is found by joining wholeheartedly in the profound power of joy. How do we join in this sacred rejoicing? We do this by letting it flow into all parts of our existence, including our modest efforts to mend the brokenness of our world.

From: Ken Butigan with Patricia Bruno, O.P., From Violence to Wholeness (Berkeley, CA: Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, 2002), pp. 51-53.

Four Steps: Center, Articulate, Receive, Agree (CARA) ⁴

The nonviolent life has many dimensions and steps. Four of these steps are:

- Centering ourselves;
- Articulating and sharing our piece of the truth;
- Receiving the other's piece of the truth; and
- Agreeing on a new way.

Center, Articulate, Receive, and Agree – CARA, for short – is a process for engaging the world and its inhabitants nonviolently.

“Cara” means “face” in Spanish. The CARA process invites us to meet others, including our opponents, face-to-face in a nonviolent way. “Cara” also means “dear one” in Latin and Italian. CARA encourages us to face all people – and especially those with whom we are in conflict — in a constructive and openhearted manner, regarding them the way we regard the dearest and most important person in our lives.

This is not always easy. That is why we need to learn and consciously choose to use this process, over and over. Fortunately or not, we are offered an opportunity to practice this virtually from moment to moment.

Putting each of the following steps into practice can be simple or complex. It will often require ingenuity and persistence and allies, especially where no level playing field exists – that is, where there are power differences between the parties. It can be carried out in a moment, or it can take years. It can be used in interpersonal conflicts, and it can be used in the process of arduous social change.

What is presented here is the framework; it is up to each of us to find creative and appropriate ways to put each step into practice in whatever context or situation in which we find ourselves.

Step One: Centering

Centering ourselves means becoming present and grounded. Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh calls it “being a mountain.” It is the process of making contact with our truest selves even in the most difficult situation. It is being rooted in our heart. By being anchored in our truest self, we are preparing to respond – and not simply react – to the situations we face.

Some ways to center ourselves include: conscious breathing; taking time to identify and name our emotional state in the moment (fear, anger, sadness, happiness); repeating inwardly and attentively a meaningful or sacred prayer, word, mantra, or name; changing physical position (for example, sitting down if one is standing); and removing ourselves from the situation for the purpose of coming to clarity about it. It is a good idea to discover the tool or process that works best for us in bringing us back to our true self. And instead of waiting until we are blindsided, it's a good idea to find a way to practice and sharpen this every day, so that it becomes a daily practice that prepares us for the moment when it will be most necessary.

Step Two: Articulating and Sharing Our Piece of the Truth

While we sometimes think that we have the whole truth, in fact we have a piece of the truth — and the un-truth. In Step Two, we identify and share our piece of the truth, a process that has four aspects:

- First, perceiving and assessing the situation in which we find ourselves.
- Second, getting clarifying feelings about this situation.
- Third, identifying what we need in this situation. What is essential and what is non-essential? What is real need and what is the un-truth (our ego, our greed, our desire for revenge, etc.).

⁴ Accessed at the *Pace e Bene: Education, Resources, and Action for Nonviolent Change* website on 1/14/2014 at: <http://paceebene.org/nonviolent-change-101/tools-nonviolent-living/nonviolent-journey/four-steps>

- And fourth, sharing our “pieces of our truth” with the other. This is a process of clarifying and conveying what is happening around us and within us by asking:
 - What is really going on in the situation? What is the issue? What factors are contributing to this issue? What are the deeper interests and motivations of each party in the situation?
 - What are we really feeling? Are we angry? Sad? Frustrated? Feeling powerless?
 - What do we need? Can we be specific?
 - How can you convey this? Can you use “I statements”? What would it take to be open, direct, vulnerable, and inviting? Can we be disarmed and disarming so that we can both feel less defensive?

Step Three: Receive the Truth of the Other Person

Step Three involves listening deeply to the other person’s truth: what they are feeling and what they need. This involves being curious about this person and her or his position, feelings, needs. Interested in the other, in their position and in them as human beings. What is her or his piece of the truth? There is a reason that they are holding a position different from the one you are; try to get to it. Try to create an environment where this can be shared.

Ways of doing this can include: Listening actively; being curious; use questions not to cross-examine or trap the other but to really find out something about the other person’s point of view that you don’t know (sometimes, as Sharon Ellison suggests, this is helped by lowering our voice at the end of the question or sentence); asking what the person means by certain words, beliefs or feelings; checking out any of our own assumptions concerning the situation; explore any inconsistencies we may notice between the other person’s words and their non-verbal communication (for example, when someone says in a loud, forced voice, “I’m fine!”); resume the conversation later if we need to have some time to think about what has been shared.

Step Four: Seeking Agreement

Step Four seeks to “put the two truths together” as the basis of creating an agreement where the needs of both parties are met. This often involves:

- Reviewing the needs and pieces of the truth of both parties.
- Working together to develop an outcome that meets these needs.
- Letting go of all non-essential elements.
- Making a plan to implement the agreement.

Afterward

At first glance, it might seem that the CARA process would only be successful where both parties are willing to use it. While this can sometimes help achieve an agreement sooner, it is not necessary. In most cases only one party will be committed to using this process. But this doesn’t matter. All the steps remain the same. The one taking the initiative still centers, articulates, receives and agrees. This involves creating an atmosphere that elicits the truth of the other and persuades them that the agreement is better than the cycle of conflict and violence.

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CARA draws on elements from Bill Moyer’s “Moving from Domination to Intimacy” workshops; Sharon Ellison’s “Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication and Nonviolent Communication” program; and “Nonviolent Communication.”

This packet was assembled by Rev. Robyn Hartwig of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Beaverton, Oregon as a means of creating space for God’s gift of active nonviolence to more fully become our way of life.