

# WITNESSING FOR THE TRUTH

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM,  
AND BEACON PRESS



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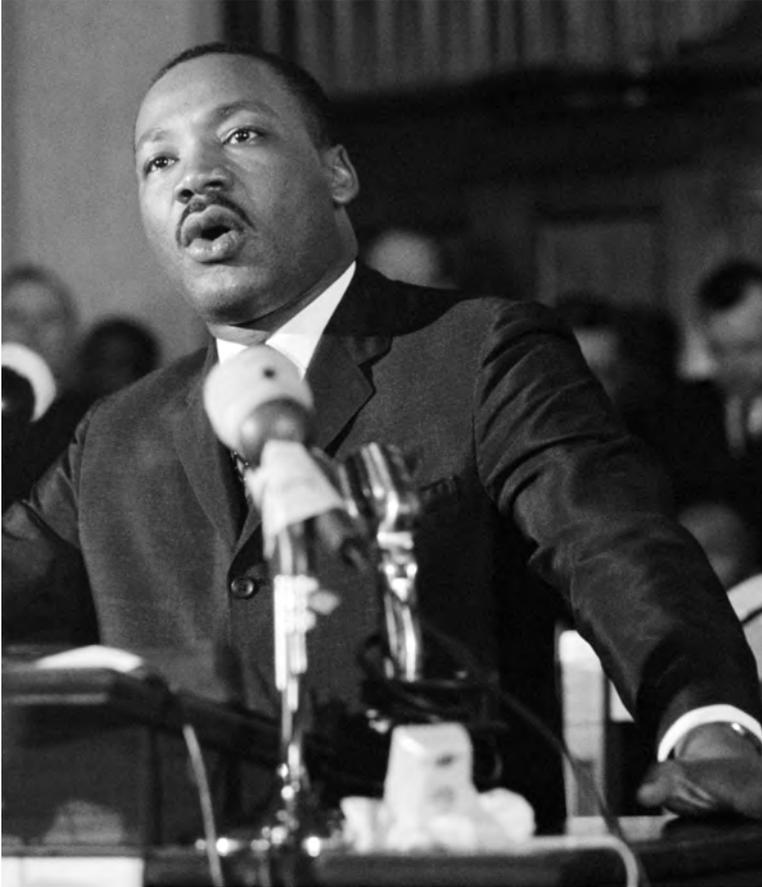


BEACON  
PRESS

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and Beacon Press*





*The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaks at the pulpit of Brown Chapel during the memorial service for the Reverend James Reeb, March 15, 1965.*

*“My own personal experience with Unitarian Universalism began when I was a student at Boston University, back in the early ’50s. I can remember on several occasions visiting Arlington Street Church, where your distinguished Dr. Greeley pastored at that time. And I can remember beyond that. . . . In many ways and for a long time now we have worked together in a very meaningful way. I want to express my personal appreciation for your support, and let me say that it has been of inestimable value in the continuance of our humble efforts.”*

—THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,  
“Don’t Sleep Through the Revolution,”  
addressing Unitarian Universalists at General Assembly, 1966

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## PREFACE

The general outline of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s career is well known: his leadership of the Montgomery bus boycott in the mid-1950s, his historic "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington in 1963, his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, his leadership of the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march in 1965, his growing opposition to the war in Vietnam as presented in his "Beyond Vietnam" speech at New York City's Riverside Church in 1967, and his tragic assassination in Memphis in 1968. Today we honor him as one of the greatest leaders and orators our country has ever produced.

Unitarian Universalists have always felt a particular kinship with Dr. King. As he recounted in his 1966 Ware Lecture, his relationship with our faith community began in the early 1950s when he was a student at Boston University and visited the Arlington Street Church to hear the Reverend Dana Greeley preach. Many UUs were active in the civil rights movement, so it was no surprise that Dr. King reached out to the leaders of the Unitarian Universalist Association in the wake of Bloody Sunday in Selma in March 1965 and asked clergy to come to Selma to bear witness to the brutality of the local authorities who were attempting to prevent the proposed march to the state capitol, in Montgomery.

The Reverend James Reeb, a UU minister serving in Boston, was one of those clergy who responded to Dr. King’s call. Reeb, along with two fellow ministers, was attacked on a street in Selma and died two days later in a hospital in Birmingham. He was thirty-eight and left behind a wife and four children.

Dr. King eulogized Reeb at a memorial service in Brown Chapel AME in Selma on March 15, 1965. The text of that eulogy went unpublished until 2001, when it was unearthed by UUA staff and published in *UU World*, our denominational magazine. I am immensely pleased that Beacon Press has included this stirring eulogy in this chapbook.

Dana Greeley, then president of the UUA, invited Dr. King to deliver the Ware Lecture at our annual General Assembly in 1966. In “Don’t Sleep Through the Revolution,” Dr. King noted the sacrifices of Reeb; of Jimmie Lee Jackson, the young man from Marion, Alabama, whose murder by an Alabama state trooper led to the Selma demonstrations; and of Viola Liuzzo, a UU layperson who left her home in Detroit to go to Selma and was murdered while driving on the highway to Montgomery. Their deaths, said Dr. King, led to the passage of the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965.

He exhorted the assembled UUs—and all people of faith—to live up to the church’s responsibility to be the “moral guardian of the community and of society.” To accomplish this, Dr. King said, we must recognize the unity of our global community. And this social revolution must be based on love, not hate. We must learn, in our later UU formulation, to stand on the side of love.

In this Ware Lecture, we see Dr. King beginning to articulate the vision that would guide the final two years of his life, a vision of the interconnectedness of issues of poverty, housing, education, peace, and justice. As Cornel West writes in his introduction to *The Radical King*, a forthcoming anthology in Beacon Press’s King Legacy series, “There is no radical King without his commitment to radical

love. . . . His revolutionary witness—embodied in anti-imperial, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and democratic socialist sentiments—was grounded in his courage to think, his courage to love, and his courage to die.”

A decade ago I visited Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta and stood in the same pulpit from which Dr. King preached. As I looked out at the sanctuary, I imagined a young Martin Luther King, Jr., growing into the prophetic leader he would become. I wondered to myself about the challenges of bringing his radical spirit to the issues of our day. At our best, at times like our 2012 Justice General Assembly in Phoenix or participating in the February 2014 Mass Moral March in Raleigh, North Carolina, we continue to answer the challenge of moral leadership. When we stand on the side of love, when we stand with the despised, we continue to answer Dr. King’s call.

I am delighted that our own Beacon Press has chosen to reprint these two addresses by Dr. King in this handsome chapbook. With roots that date back to the abolitionist movement, Beacon has been uniquely positioned and dedicated to publishing books on social justice, human rights, and racial equality. Dr. King’s last full-length book, *Where Do We Go from Here*, a reflection on a decade of the civil rights struggle, was first published in paperback by Beacon back in 1968. In 2009, Beacon Press partnered with the estate of Martin Luther King, Jr., to become the exclusive trade publisher of Dr. King’s works. With generous support from the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Beacon has worked with scholars and civil rights veterans to delve into archives and create entirely original collections of King’s work that speak to issues we face today, including racial and economic justice, global peace and nonviolence, and the role of religion and faith in society. Beacon celebrated the fifth anniversary of the series back at Ebenezer in Atlanta in April of 2014.

Despite the many advances since the 1950s, today we face the resurgence of the suppression of voting rights, a broken immigration system, and growing inequality in our society. In confronting these evils, Dr. King's words are as meaningful today as they were fifty years ago.

—Peter Morales, president,  
Unitarian Universalist Association



A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

*This eulogy for the Reverend James Reeb was delivered by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Brown Chapel, Selma, Alabama, March 15, 1965.*

And, if he should die,  
Take his body and cut it into little stars.  
He will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night.\*

These beautiful words from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* so eloquently describe the radiant life of James Reeb. He entered the stage of history just thirty-eight years ago, and in the brief years that he was privileged to act on this mortal stage, he played his part exceedingly well. James Reeb was martyred in the Judeo-Christian faith that all men are brothers. His death was a result of a sensitive religious spirit. His crime was that he dared to live his faith; he placed himself alongside the disinherited black brethren of this community.

The world is aroused over the murder of James Reeb, for he symbolizes the forces of goodwill in our nation. He demonstrated the conscience of the nation. He was an attorney for the defense of the innocent in the court of world opinion. He was a witness to the truth that men of different races and classes might live, eat, and work together as brothers.

James Reeb could not be accused of being only concerned about justice for Negroes away from home. He and his family live in Roxbury, Massachusetts, a predominantly Negro community. [They] devoted their lives to aiding families in low-income housing areas. Again, we must ask the question: Why must good men die for doing good? "O Jerusalem, why did you murder the prophets and persecute those who come to preach your salvation?" So the Reverend James Reeb has something to say to all of us in his death.

Naturally, we are compelled to ask the question, *Who* killed James Reeb? The answer is simple and rather limited when we think of the *who*. He was murdered by a few sick, demented, and misguided men who have the strange notion that you express dissent through murder. There is another haunting, poignant, desperate question we are forced to ask this afternoon, that I asked a few days ago as we funeralized James Jackson. It is the question, *What* killed James Reeb? When we move from the *who* to the *what*, the blame is wide and the responsibility grows.

James Reeb was murdered by the indifference of every minister of the gospel who has remained silent behind the safe security of stained-glass windows. He was murdered by the irrelevancy of a church that will stand amid social evil and serve as a taillight rather than a headlight, an echo rather than a voice. He was murdered by the irresponsibility of every politician who has moved down the path of demagoguery, who has fed his constituents the stale bread of hatred and the spoiled meat of racism. He was murdered by the

brutality of every sheriff and law enforcement agent who practices lawlessness in the name of the law. He was murdered by the timidity of a federal government that can spend millions of dollars a day to keep troops in South Vietnam yet cannot protect the lives of its own citizens seeking constitutional rights. Yes, he was even murdered by the cowardice of every Negro who tacitly accepts the evil system of segregation, who stands on the sidelines in the midst of a mighty struggle for justice.

So in his death, James Reeb says something to each of us, black and white alike—says that we must substitute courage for caution, says to us that we must be concerned not merely about who murdered him but about the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murder. His death says to us that we must work passionately, unrelentingly, to make the American dream a reality, so he did not die in vain.

God still has a way of bringing good out of evil. History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive. The innocent blood of this fine servant of God may well serve as the redemptive force that will bring new light to this dark state. This tragic death may lead our nation to substitute aristocracy of character for aristocracy of color. James Reeb may cause the whole citizenry of Alabama to transform the negative extremes of a dark past into the positive extremes of a bright future. Indeed, this tragic event may cause the white South to come to terms with its conscience.

So in spite of the darkness of this hour, we must not despair. As preceding speakers have said so eloquently, we must not become bitter nor must we harbor the desire to retaliate with violence; we must not lose faith in our white brothers who happen to be misguided. Somehow we must still believe that the most misguided among them will learn to respect the dignity and worth of all human personalities.

I know our hearts, all of the sympathy that we can muster, go out to Mrs. Reeb and the children. This is the second time within the last two weeks I've had to stand in this state, in the black belt of Alabama, to eulogize individuals who have been brutally murdered. It is never an easy experience. In these difficult moments one searches for words of consolation for the family and friends, all of us, as we go on in today's efforts.

As I have said, it is almost impossible to say anything that can totally console us in these difficult moments and remove the deep clouds of disappointment which are floating in our mental skies. But I hope that we can find a little consolation from the universality of this experience. Death comes to every individual. There is an amazing democracy about death. It is not an aristocracy for some of the people, but a democracy for all of the people. Kings die and beggars die; rich men die and poor men die; merchants die and maids die; old people die and young people die. Death comes to the innocent; it comes to the guilty. Death is the irreducible common denominator of all men.

I hope we can also find some consolation in the great affirmations of religion, which tell us that death is not the end. Whether we call it "immortality of influence," whether we think of it—immortality—in terms of continued personal existence, somewhere there is something in our faith that reminds us that death is not a period which ends this great sentence of life but a comma that punctuates it to a loftier significance. Death is not a blind alley that leads the human race into a state of nothingness but an open door which leads men into life eternal. Let this daring faith, this great invincible surmise, be our sustaining power during these trying days.

At times, life is hard, as hard as crucible steel. It has its deep and painful moments. Like the ever-flowing waters of the river, life has its moments of drought and its moments of flower. Like the ever-changing cycle of the seasons, life has the soothing warmth of its summers and the piercing chill of its winters. Through it all,

God walks with us. Never forget that God is able to lift us from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, transform dark and desolate perils into sunlit paths of inner peace.

One day the history of this great period of social change will be written in all of its completeness. On that bright day our nation will recognize its real heroes. They will be thousands of dedicated men and women with a noble sense of purpose that enables them to face fury and hostile mobs with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneers. They will be faceless, anonymous, relentless young people, black and white, who have temporarily left behind the towers of learning to storm the barricades of violence. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old Negro woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity, and with the people who decided not to ride the segregated buses, who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness, "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." They will be ministers of the gospel, priests, rabbis, and nuns, who are willing to march for freedom, to go to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know from these dedicated children of God courageously protesting segregation, they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream, standing up with the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby carrying our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding Fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. When this glorious story is written, the name of James Reeb will stand as a shining example of manhood at its best.

So I can say to you this afternoon, my friends, that in spite of the tensions and uncertainties of this period, something profoundly meaningful is taking place. Old systems of exploitation and oppression are passing away. Out of the wombs of a frail world, new

systems of justice and equality are being born. Doors of opportunity are gradually being opened. Those at the bottom of society, shirtless and barefoot people of the land, are developing a new sense of somebodyness, carving a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of despair. "People who stand in darkness have seen a great light." Here and there an individual or group dares to love and rises to the majestic height of moral maturity.

Therefore I am not yet discouraged about the future. Granted, the easygoing optimism of yesteryear is impossible. Granted, that those who pioneered in the struggle for peace and freedom will still face uncomfortable jail terms and painful threats of death; they will still be battered by the storms of persecution, leading them to the nagging feeling that they can no longer bear such a heavy burden; the temptation of wanting to retreat to a more quiet and serene life. Granted, that we face a world crisis which leaves us standing so often amid the surging murmur of life's restless seas. But every crisis has both its dangers and its opportunities, its valleys of salvation or doom in a dark, confused world. The kingdom of God may yet reign in the hearts of men.

I say, in conclusion, the greatest tribute that we can pay to James Reeb this afternoon is to continue the work he so nobly started but could not finish because his life—like the Schubert "Unfinished Symphony"—was cut off at an early age. We have the challenge and charge to continue. We must work right here in Alabama, and all over the United States, till men everywhere will respect the dignity and worth of human personalities. We must work with all our hearts to establish a society where men will be—that "out of one blood God made all men to dwell upon the face of the earth." We must work with determination for that great day. "Justice will roll down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream." We must work right here, where "every valley shall be exalted, every

mountain and hill shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places straight. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” We must work to make the Declaration of Independence real in our everyday lives.

If we will do this, we will be able—right here in Alabama, right here in the Deep South, right here in the United States—to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. We will be able to speed up the day when all of God’s children—as expressed so beautifully in this marvelous ecumenical service—all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands in unity and brotherhood to bring about the bright day of the brotherhood of man under the guidance of the fatherhood of God.

So we thank God for the life of James Reeb. We thank God for his goodness. We thank God that he was willing to lay down his life in order to redeem the soul of our nation. So I say—so Horatio said as he stood over the dead body of Hamlet—“Good night sweet prince: may the flight of angels take thee to thy eternal rest.”<sup>†‡</sup>

\* The exact lines from the play are “And, when he shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars.”

† The exact line from the play is “And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!”

‡ From a recording made by Carl Benkert and originally transcribed by *UU World*.



## DON'T SLEEP THROUGH THE REVOLUTION

### The 1966 Ware Lecture

*Delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly, Hollywood, Florida, May 18, 1966*

INTRODUCTION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

*Delivered by Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, president, Unitarian Universalist Association*

Our gathering tonight is for the annual Ware Lectureship, perpetuated by a sum of money and board action early in this century. It is in honor of three generations of the distinguished Ware family. The Reverend Henry Ware, Sr., became, in 1805, the liberal but controversial Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard, precipitating the Unitarian movement. His son, Henry Ware, Jr., was a minister and one of the general founders of the American Unitarian Association. The grandson of the third generation, John Fothergill Waterhouse Ware, was a distinguished Boston minister. The last two Ware lecturers have been Professor Linus Pauling, also a Nobel Prize winner,

in San Francisco two years ago, and Dr. Harry Gideonse, president of Brooklyn College, last year in Boston.

We are extremely grateful to our present lecturer for honoring us tonight, and in the face of an exceedingly difficult program and of trying incidents. We have been reminded just now of Goethe's statement that "great men create circumstances even more than circumstances create great men." Who can say whether this man is more the product of his times or the architect of his age? Goethe would make his reply. In either case, the god of history is with him. Preacher, reformer, citizen, man of peace, lover of justice, in any history he will be appraised as one of the truly great men of this century. We offer him not only our respect but our love and our loyal support. It is a great privilege to give to you Dr. Martin Luther King.

#### DON'T SLEEP THROUGH THE REVOLUTION

I need not pause to say how delighted I am to be here tonight and to have the privilege of being with you for this important meeting. And I do want to express my warm personal appreciation to Dr. Greeley and other members of the committee who extended the invitation. There are those wonderful moments in life when you speak before a group that is so near and dear to you that you don't feel like you have to engage in the art of persuasion. You don't feel like you are in the midst of strangers. You know that you are with friends. I can assure you that I feel that way tonight.

My own personal experience with Unitarian Universalism began when I was a student at Boston University, back in the early '50s. I can remember on several occasions visiting Arlington Street Church, where your distinguished Dr. Greeley pastored at that time. And I can remember beyond that, in the early years of my ministry, indeed, beyond that in the early years of the bus boycotts in Montgomery, Alabama, three of your ministers visited and encouraged me during that very trying and often difficult period. I refer to

David Cole, Alfred Hawkins, and my dear friend who's on the platform tonight, Homer Jack. Since that time I have worked with Dr. Jack in Montgomery, in Ghana, West Africa, in Washington, in the world peace effort, and also in Selma. I also want to acknowledge your massive participation through your commission on religion and race in the events in Alabama during 1965. Now, this support expressed itself both before and after the death of your colleague and mine, the Reverend James J. Reeb. We grieved at the death of Mr. Reeb, and I was glad to participate in his memorial service in the historic Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which I have the honor of serving as president, participates with the American Friends Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Association in the James Reeb memorial fund. So far we have substantially helped the family of Jimmie Lee Jackson and other victims of racial violence. In Chicago we are also engaged in a campaign to end slums and the conditions that create slums. We are happy to welcome the cooperation of Unitarian Universalists in that movement. So you can see that in many ways and for a long time now we have worked together in a very meaningful way. I want to express my personal appreciation for your support, and let me say that it has been of inestimable value in the continuance of our humble efforts.

Let me say that I'm happy to be a Ware lecturer and to be a part of the great names that have been in this lectureship. It is a real privilege, and I can assure you that it is a real honor to be in this significant lectureship. I would like to use as a subject the church remaining awake during a great revolution. I'm sure that each of you has read that arresting little story from the pen of Washington Irving entitled "Rip Van Winkle." One thing that we usually remember about the story of Rip Van Winkle is that he slept twenty years. But there is another point in that story which is almost always completely overlooked: it is the sign on the inn of the little town on the Hudson from which Rip went up into the mountains

for his long sleep. When he went up, the sign had a picture of King George III of England. When he came down, the sign had a picture of George Washington, the first president of the United States. When Rip Van Winkle looked up at the picture of George Washington he was amazed; he was completely lost. He knew not who he was. This incident reveals to us that the most striking thing about the story of Rip Van Winkle is not merely that he slept twenty years, but that he slept through a revolution. While he was peacefully snoring up in the mountains, a revolution was taking place in the world that would alter the face of human history. Yet Rip knew nothing about it; he was asleep.

One of the great misfortunes of history is that all too many individuals and institutions find themselves in a great period of change and yet fail to achieve the new attitudes and outlooks that the new situation demands. There is nothing more tragic than to sleep through a revolution. And there can be no gainsaying of the fact that a social revolution is taking place in our world today. We see it in other nations in the demise of colonialism. We see it in our own nation in the struggle against racial segregation and discrimination, and as we notice this struggle, we are aware of the fact that a social revolution is taking place in our midst. Victor Hugo once said that there is nothing more powerful in all the world than an idea whose time has come. The idea whose time has come today is the idea of freedom and human dignity, and so all over the world we see something of freedom explosion, and this reveals to us that we are in the midst of revolutionary times. An older order is passing away and a new order is coming into being.

The great question is, What do we do when we find ourselves in such a period? Certainly the church has a great responsibility, because when the church is true to its nature, it stands as a moral guardian of the community and of society. It has always been the role of the church to broaden horizons, to challenge the status quo, and to question and break mores if necessary. I'm sure that

we all agree that the church has a major role to play in this period of social change. I would like to suggest some of the things that the church must continually do in order to remain awake through this revolution.

First, we are challenged to instill within the people of our congregation a world perspective. The world in which we live is geographically one. Now, more and more, we are challenged to make it one in terms of brotherhood. Modern man, through his scientific genius, has been able to dwarf distance and place time in chains, and our jet planes have compressed into minutes distances that once took weeks and even months. I think Bob Hope, if I can be a little humorous here, has adequately described this new jet age in which we live. He said it is an age in which it is possible to take a non-stop flight from Los Angeles, California, to New York City—a distance of about three thousand miles. He goes on to say that if on taking off in Los Angeles you develop hiccups, you will hic in Los Angeles and cup in New York City. You know, it is possible because of the time difference to take a flight from Tokyo on Sunday morning and arrive in Seattle on the preceding Saturday night. When your friends meet you at the airport and ask you when you left Tokyo you will have to say, “I left tomorrow.” Well, this is a bit humorous, but I’m trying to laugh a basic fact into all of us and it is simply this: that through our scientific genius we have made of this world a neighborhood, and now through our moral and ethical commitment we must make it a brotherhood. We must live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools. This is a fact of life. No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone.

Some years ago, Mrs. King and I journeyed to that great country known as India. I never will forget the experience. It was a marvelous experience to meet and talk with the great leaders of India and to meet and talk with thousands and thousands of people all over the cities and villages of that vast country. These experiences

will remain dear to me as long as the cords of memories exist. But, my friends, I must say to you tonight that there were depressing moments. How can one avoid being depressed when he sees with his own eyes evidence of millions of people going to bed hungry? How can one avoid being depressed when he sees thousands sleeping on the sidewalks at night? More than a million people sleep on the sidewalks of Calcutta and Bombay every night. More than 600,000 sleep on the sidewalks of Calcutta alone. They have no houses to go in; they have no beds to sleep in. How can one avoid being depressed when he discovers that out of India's population of 400 million people, some 380 million earn less than ninety dollars a year? Most of these people have never seen a doctor or a dentist.

As I noticed these conditions, something within me cried out, Can we in the United States stand idly by and not be concerned? And an answer came: Oh no, because our destiny is tied up with the destiny of India and of every other nation. I started thinking about the millions of dollars we spend each day to store surplus food, and I said to myself, I know where we can store that food free of charge: in the wrinkled stomachs of millions of God's children in Asia, in Africa, in South America, and in our own nation who go to bed hungry. It may be that we spend too much of our national budget establishing military bases around the world and too little on bases of genuine concern and understanding. All I'm saying is this: That all life is interrelated, and somehow we are all tied together. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of all reality. John Donne caught it years ago and placed it in graphic terms, "No man is an island entire of himself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." He goes on to say, "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; therefore send not to know for whom the

bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”\* This realization is absolutely necessary if we are to remain awake in this revolution.

Secondly, it is necessary for the church to reaffirm over and over again the essential immorality of racial segregation. Any church which affirms the morality of segregation is sleeping through the revolution. We must make it clear that segregation, whether it's in the public schools, in housing, or in recreational facilities, or in the church itself, is morally wrong and sinful. It is not only sociologically untenable or politically unsound or merely economically unwise; it is morally wrong and sinful. There are many insights in all of the major religious faiths which bring this out. Segregation is evil—to use the thinking of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber—because it substitutes an “I-It” relationship for an “I-Thou” relationship. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, segregation is wrong because it is based on human laws which are out of harmony with the moral, the natural, the eternal laws of the universe. Paul Tillich, the great Protestant theologian who died some months ago, said that sin is separation. What is segregation but an affirmation of man's tragic estrangement, his terrible separation, his awful sinfulness? So, over and over again, we must make it clear that we are through with this unjust system now, henceforth, and forever more.

There is another thing that the church must do to remain awake. I think it is necessary to refute the idea that there are superior and inferior races. We must get rid of the notion once and for all that there are superior and inferior races. It is out of this notion that the whole doctrine of white supremacy came into being, and the church must take a stand through religious education and other channels to direct the popular mind at this point, for there are some people who still believe this strange doctrine. Now, fortunately, I'm sure you don't have any Unitarian Universalists who believe this, but I think some of my Baptist brothers around the South believe it, and I would like to get you to help me out with some of my brothers. It's a strange notion that has made for a great deal of strife and

suffering. Both the academic world and the disciplines of science have refuted this idea. Anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and [Melville] Herskovits, after long years of study, have made it clear that they find no evidence for the idea of superior and inferior races. There may be superior and inferior individuals in every race, but no superior or inferior races. In spite of this, the notion still lingers around.

Now, there was a time that people tried to justify it on the basis of the Bible. Strange indeed how individuals will often use, or should I say misuse, the Bible to crystallize the patterns of the status quo and justify their prejudices. So from some pulpits it was argued that the Negro was inferior by nature because of Noah's curse upon the children of Ham. The apostle's dictum often became a watchword: servants, be obedient to your master. One brother had probably read the logic of the great philosopher Aristotle. You know, Aristotle did a great deal to bring into being what we know now in philosophy as formal logic, and formal logic has a big word known as a *sylllogism*, which has a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. So this brother decided to put his argument of the inferiority of the Negro in the framework of an Aristotelian syllogism. He came out with his major premise: "All men are made in the image of God"; then came his minor premise: "God, as everybody knows, is not a Negro; therefore, the Negro is not a man." This was the kind of reasoning that prevailed. Now, on the whole, I guess we have gotten away from this; most people don't use the Bible and religion to justify segregation, although there are a few left. I was reading the other day where one of our white brothers in Mississippi said that God was a charter member of the White Citizens' Council.

Today's arguments are generally placed on more subtle cultural grounds, for instance: "The Negro is not culturally ready for integration. If you integrate the schools and other areas of life, this will pull the white race back a generation." And another: "The Negro is a criminal; you see he has the highest crime rate in any

city.” So the arguments go on ad infinitum. Those who use these arguments never go on to say that if there are lagging standards in the Negro community—and there certainly are—they lag because of segregation and discrimination. They never go on to say that criminal responses are environmental and not racial. Poverty, ignorance, economic deprivation, social isolation breed crime in any racial group. It is a tortuous logic to use the tragic results of segregation as an argument for the continuation of it. It is necessary to go to the causal root to deal with the problem. So it is necessary for the church, through all of its channels of education and through all of its work, to guide the popular mind and rid the community of the notion of superior and inferior races. We’ve all seen enough to refute this idea. We’ve seen Negroes who have given inspiring examples of ability to rise above the shackles of a difficult environment. They have justified the conviction of the poet that “fleecy locks and black complexion cannot forfeit nature’s claim.”<sup>†</sup> 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 the ocean at a span, I must still be measured by my soul; the mind is the standard of the man.

The next thing that the church must do to remain awake through this revolution is to move out into the arena of social action. It is not enough for the church to work in the ideological realm and to clear up misguided ideas. To remain awake through this social revolution, the church must engage in strong action programs to get rid of the last vestiges of segregation and discrimination. It is necessary to get rid of one or two myths if we’re really going to engage in this kind of action program. One is the notion that legislation is not effective in bringing about the changes that we need in human relations. This argument says that you’ve got to change the heart in order to solve the problem, that you can’t change the heart through legislation. They would say you’ve got to do that through religion and education. Well, there’s some truth in this. Before we can solve these problems, men and women must

rise to the majestic heights of being obedient to the unenforceable. I would be the first to say this: If we are to have a truly integrated society, white persons and Negro persons and members of all groups must live together, not merely because the law says it but because it's natural and because it's right. But that does not make legislation less important. It may be true that you can't legislate integration, but you can legislate desegregation. It may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless. The law cannot make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important also. And so, while the law may not change the hearts of men, it does change the habits of men. So it is necessary for the church to support strong, meaningful civil rights legislation.

Fortunately we have seen some real advances at this point. It is very consoling to me, and I know to all of us, the role which all of the major denominations within the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Jewish faiths played in the achievement of the civil rights bill of 1964, the voting rights bill of 1965. We struggled in Selma, Alabama, and in a real sense we developed right there in that little town something that the councils of the world have not been able to develop: a real ecumenical movement. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews stood in Selma, and in a beautiful and meaningful way that was the ecumenical movement which created the voting rights bill. That bill is a tribute to persons like James Reeb, Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, and Jimmie Lee Jackson, those who died and suffered to make it possible. Now, the president is calling for new civil rights legislation to deal with two old problems. One is the mal-administration of justice in many sections of the South. It is necessary for all people of goodwill and for all church bodies to strongly support this bill, which will make murder or threatened assaults of civil rights workers or persons engaged in the promotion of constitutional rights a federal crime.

Now, I would hope that everyone under the sound of my voice tonight will do something in a positive manner. I know that you support it, but support it by writing your congressman, support it by mobilizing support within the community in order that it will pass. But there is a more difficult title in that bill, one that must ultimately be passed if America is to rise to its full maturity. That is the section of the bill which calls for an end to discrimination in housing. It means that discrimination in all housing will be federally nonsanctioned. It involves the sale, the rental, and the financing of all housing. This is the difficult one because there still are many fears around. There are stereotypes about Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and others. Studies reveal that there are numerous forces both private and public which make for the problem, because they are profiting by the existence of segregation in housing. I am convinced that if we are to have a truly integrated society, we must deal with the housing problem. The school problem is difficult and it will never be totally solved until we solve the housing problem, and so it is my hope that we will go all out over America to bring this new legislation into being and to insist that it will be vigorously enforced, once it is passed, for there is still a gulf between legislation on the one hand and the enforcement of that legislation on the other. We see this in the South every day. In 1954 the Supreme Court of our nation rendered a decision declaring segregation unconstitutional in the public schools. Yet, twelve years later, only 5.2 percent of the Negro students of the South are attending integrated schools. We haven't even made one percent progress a year. If we continue this pace it will take about ninety-six more years to integrate the schools in the South. There is still a gulf between legislative and judicial decrees and the actual enforcement of them. It seems to me that an alive, relevant church should go all out to see that legislation becomes a reality and that it is vigorously enforced once it exists.

A second myth that we must deal with is that of exaggerated progress. Certainly we have made progress in race relations. And I

think we can all glory that things are better today than they were ten years ago or even three years ago. We should be proud of the steps we've made to rid our nation of this great evil of racial segregation and discrimination. On the other hand, we must realize that the plant of freedom is only a bud and not yet a flower. The Negro is freer in 1966, but he is not yet free. The Negro knows more dignity today than he has known in any period of his history in this country, but he is not yet equal. There still are stubborn, difficult problems to deal with all over the country. I'm appalled that some people feel that the civil rights struggle is over because we have a 1964 civil rights bill with ten titles and a voting rights bill. Over and over again people ask, What else do you want? They feel that everything is all right.

Well, let them look around our big cities. I can mention one where we're working now; not to say that it's the worst city in the United States but just to reveal the problem that we face. Take a city like Chicago; it's a prototype of all our major urban ghettos. There we find that 90 percent of the Negro children of Chicago are in school with 92 percent children of their own race, which means that the schools are almost 100 percent segregated. Facilities are inadequate in all of the ghetto schools. Chicago spends approximately \$266 per pupil in the predominantly Negro schools, when \$368 are spent in the predominantly white schools. In the suburbs it spends as much as \$780 per pupil. This is a very real problem. Then, in the area of housing, it is estimated that between 36 and 49 percent of the Negro families of Chicago live in deteriorated housing conditions. Ninety seven percent of the Negro families of Chicago live in what we refer to sociologically as the ghetto; that is, 97 percent of the Negroes live only with Negroes. They are isolated from the mainstream, the total life of the community. In the economic area, the problem is even more serious. Chicago has one of the lowest rates of unemployment of any major city in the United States. It's 2.6 percent, but when you go to the Negro community,

the unemployment rate, which includes only people who once had jobs, is about 10 percent. If you include those who have never held jobs, about 13 percent of the Negro labor force is unemployed. If the whole of Chicago confronted in unemployment what the Negro is confronting, there would be a staggering depression, worse than any this country has ever known. So the Negro in his own life is confronting a major depression. This is true of every major city in the United States. While there is great affluence all around, there are still stubborn depths of poverty, deprivation, and despair. The average white high school dropout in Chicago earns more than the average Negro college graduate. Again, this is true in cities all over the country.

These are stubborn, difficult problems, and yet they are problems that must be tackled, for I need not remind you of the dangers inherent therein. There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of individuals within that society who feel that they have no stake in it, who feel that they have nothing to lose. These are the people who will riot; these are the people who will turn their ears from pleas for nonviolence. For the health of our nation, these problems must be solved. In the areas of housing, schooling, and employment there is still a great deal that must be done. We've come a long, long way; we still have a long, long way to go, and action programs are necessary. I've heard it said that the day of demonstrations is over; this is something that we hear a great deal. Well, I'm sorry that I can't agree with that. I wish that I could say the day of demonstrations is over, but as long as these problems are with us, it will be necessary to demonstrate in order to call attention to them. I'm not saying that a demonstration is going to solve the problem of poverty, the problem of housing, the problems that we face in the schools. It's going to take something much more than a demonstration, but at least the demonstration calls attention to it; at least the demonstration creates a kind of constructive crisis that causes a community to see the problem and

causes a community to begin moving toward the point of acting on it. The church must support this kind of demonstration. As the days unfold, I'm sure that we will need this more.

People talk about the long, hot summer that's ahead. I always say that I don't think we have to have a long, hot, violent summer. I certainly don't want to see it because I hate violence, and I don't think it solves any problems. I think we can offset the long, hot, violent summer with the long, hot, nonviolent summer. People are huddled in ghettos, living in the most crowded and depressing conditions. They need some outlet, some way to express their legitimate discontent. What is a better way than to provide nonviolent channels through which they can do it? If this isn't provided, they are going to find it through more irrational, misguided means. So the nonviolent movement has a job to do in providing the nonviolent channels through which those who are caught in these conditions can express their discontent and frustration.

Now, let me say that I'm still convinced that nonviolence is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and human dignity. And I'd like to say just a word about this philosophy since it has been the underlying philosophy of our movement. It has power because it has a way of disarming the opponent. It exposes his moral defenses; it weakens his morale. And at the same time it works on his heart and on his conscience, and he just doesn't know what to do. If he doesn't hit you, wonderful. If he hits you, you develop the quiet courage of accepting blows without retaliating. If he doesn't put you in jail, that's very nice; nobody with any sense loves to go to jail. But if he puts you in jail, you go in that jail and transform it from a dungeon of shame into a haven of freedom and human dignity. Even if he tries to kill you, you develop the inner conviction that there are some things so precious, some things so eternally true that they are worth dying for. If a man has not discovered some thing that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.

There's another good thing about nonviolence: through it a person can use moral means to secure moral ends. There are still those who sincerely believe that the end justifies the means, no matter what the means happen to be. No matter how violent or how deceptive or anything else they are. Nonviolence at its best would break with the system that argues that. Nonviolence would say that the morality of the ends is implicit in the means, and that in the long run of history, destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends. So, since we are working toward a just society in this movement, we should use just methods to get there. Since we are working for the end of a nonviolent society in this movement, we must use nonviolent means and methods to get there. Since we are working for an integrated society as an end, we must work on an integrated basis on our staffs and civil rights organizations so that we don't get to racial justice and integration through the means of Black Nationalism.

Another thing about this philosophy which is often misunderstood [is] that it says that at its best, the love ethic can be a reality in a social revolution. Most revolutions in the past have been based on hope and hate, with the rising expectations of the revolutionaries implemented by hate for the perpetrators of the unjust system in the old order. I think the different thing about the revolution that has taken place in our country is that it has maintained the hope element and at the same time it has added the dimension of love. Many people would disagree with me and say that love hasn't been there. I think we have to stop and talk about what we mean in this context, because I would be the first to say that it is nonsense to urge oppressed people to love their violent oppressors in an affectionate sense. And I'm certainly not talking about that when I talk about love standing at the center of our struggle.

I think it is necessary to see the meaning of love in higher terms. The Greek language has three words for love: one is the [word] *eros*, another is the word *filio*, and another is the word *agape*. I'm

thinking not of eros or of friendship, as expressed in filio, but of agape, which is understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill for all men, an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. When one rises to love on this level, he loves a person who does the evil deed while hating the deed. I believe that in our best moments in this struggle we have tried to adhere to this. In some strange way we have been able to stand up in the face of our most violent opponents and say, in substance, we will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail and we will still love you. Threaten our children, bomb our homes, send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hours, and drag us out on some wayside road and beat us and leave us half dead, and as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your propaganda agents around the nation and make it appear we are not fit morally, culturally, or otherwise for integration, and we will still love you. But be assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And one day we will win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will so appeal to your heart and your conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.

This is our message in the nonviolent movement when we are true to it. I think it is a powerful method, and I still believe in it. I know that it will lead us into that new day. Not a day when we will seek to rise from a position of disadvantage to one of advantage, thereby subverting justice. Not a day when we will substitute one tyranny for another. We know that a doctrine of black supremacy is as evil as a doctrine of white supremacy. We know that God is not interested merely in the freedom of black men and brown men and yellow men, but God is interested in the freedom of the whole

human race. He is interested in the creation of a society where all men will live together as brothers and every man will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. With the nonviolent method guiding us on, we can go on into that brighter day when justice will come.

I talk a great deal about the need for a kind of divine discontent. And I always mention that there are certain technical words within every science which become stereotypes and clichés. Modern psychology has a word that has become common; it is the word *maladjusted*. We read a great deal about it. It is a ringing cry of modern child psychology, and certainly we all want to live the well-adjusted life and avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But I must say to you this evening, my friends, there are some things in our nation and in our world to which I'm proud to be maladjusted. And I call upon you to be maladjusted and all people of goodwill to be maladjusted to these things until the good society is realized. I never intend to adjust myself to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few and leave millions of people perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. I must honestly say, however much criticism it brings, that I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism and to the self-defeating effects of physical violence. In a day when Sputniks and Geminis are dashing through outer space and ballistic missiles are carving highways of death through the stratosphere, no nation can win a war. It is no longer a choice between nonviolence and violence; it is now a choice between nonviolence and nonexistence. The alternative to disarmament under a strong UN, the alternative to a suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, and the point of coming to that condition of not bombing the North, the alternative to admitting China may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of

annihilation. And our earthly habitat can be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.

Yes, I must confess that I believe firmly that our world is in dire need of a new organization: the International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. Men and women as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who in the midst of the injustices of his day, cried out in words that echo across the centuries: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." As maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln, who had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half slave and half free. As maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson, who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery, cried in words lifted to cosmic proportions: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain [un]alienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." As maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth, who could say to the men and women of his day: "He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword." Through such maladjustment we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.

Let me say in conclusion that I have not despaired of the future. I believe firmly that we can solve this problem. I know that there are still difficult days ahead. And they are days of glorious opportunity. Our goal for America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's. Before the Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the words that I just quoted from the Declaration of Independence, we were here. Before the beautiful words of "The Star-Spangled Banner" were written, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebearers labored here without wages. They made cotton king. They built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most oppressive and humiliating conditions.

And yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to grow and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn't stop us, the opposition that we now face will surely fail. We're going to win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of the almighty God are embodied in our echoing demands. And we can sing "We Shall Overcome" because somehow we know the dark of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right: "No lie can live forever." We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right: "Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again." We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right: "Truth forever on the scaffold / Wrong forever on the throne, — / Yet that scaffold sways the future / And, behind the dim unknown, / Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."<sup>‡</sup> With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. We will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood and speed up that day when all of God's children all over our nation and the world will be able to walk the earth as brothers and sisters, and then we can sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty we are free at last."

Thank you.

\* The exact lines are "No man is an island entire of itself . . . and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls."

† From William Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint" (1788).

‡ From "The Present Crisis" (1844).



# —THE— KING LEGACY

In partnership with the estate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Beacon Press is proud to share the great privilege and responsibility of furthering Dr. King’s powerful message of global justice and equality with a historic publishing program: the King Legacy.

The series encompasses Dr. King’s most important writings, including sermons, orations, lectures, prayers, and all of his previously published books that were recently out of print. We’ve enhanced these important works with photos, never before released audios, and new material from acclaimed scholars, civil rights activists, and religious leaders. Published accessibly and in multiple formats—including, for the first time ever, electronic formats—each volume seeks to underscore Dr. King’s continued relevance for the twenty-first century and to bring his message to a new generation of readers.

In 2013, Beacon Press launched the King Legacy for Students, a project developed in large part by practicing teachers themselves, making it, essentially, an educators’ endeavor. Now, for the first time, teachers and students are accessing Dr. King’s writings not only electronically but in stand-alone book form. To support teachers in the successful use of the work in their classrooms, Beacon collaborated with scholars and curriculum developers at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University to create free online curricula, aligned with federal Common Core

guidelines, and an interactive website for twenty-first-century learning. The goal of this program is to transform the way young people learn about history by providing schools with productive models and possibilities for teaching Dr. King's work within the context of one of our nation's most important eras: the civil rights movement.

This work would not have been possible without the continued support of the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, and we gratefully acknowledge their generous contributions.

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“There are those wonderful moments in life when you speak before a group that is so near and dear to you that you don’t feel like you have to engage in the art of persuasion. You don’t feel like you are in the midst of strangers. You know that you are with friends.”

—THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,  
addressing Unitarian Universalists at General Assembly, 1966