The Six Principles of Nonviolence

Principle One : Nonviolence is NOT for Cowards but a way of life for courageous people

Nonviolence has a complete disrespect of violence; it will not use violence as a way to solve problems or conflicts. In the face of violence a Nonviolent courageous person will not resort to violence nor back down in fear when violence is directed towards them.

Dr. King said that we must resist violence in any form. It will not belittle or name call. Nonviolence is better because it treats people with respect, and is an honorable method to achieve justice.

Nonviolence is affirmative, standing not only against what is wrong but for what is right and just.

Principle Two : The Beloved Community is the Goal

The Beloved Community is the foundation for developing the future where unjust conditions can be dealt with effectively.

The Beloved Community has been the goal of people and faiths throughout history. In this community truth and justice will be victorious. It is a goal that must start within the hearts and souls of those who seek justice and use nonviolence to achieve true peace.

The idea of the Beloved Community is that everyone is treated equally with respect and Love. The goal is justice and true peace.

Justice cannot happen by being unjust. If peace is the goal, peaceful means must be used. "By any means necessary" does not work in the Beloved Community. The ends and means must be the same; therefore the end cannot justify the means. The way you act must reflect your goal.

Principle Three : Attack Forces of Evil, NOT Persons Doing Evil

Recognize the problem and separate the person's action from the situation, you must Love and respect them but don't ignore their unjust actions.

The unjust conditions and his desire to bring about equality was the focus of Dr. King's energy and attention. People are not the problem; what must be changed are the conditions under which people operate.

People can be a product of their environment. No one is born racist, but they learn to be racist. Nonviolence helps us understand the person and confront the problem (like racism). The person is not the problem, the conditions are.

Principle Four : Accept Suffering without Retaliation for the Sake of the Cause

Willingness to endure hardship for a clearly defined just cause can have an impact on the perpetrator of the violence as well as on the larger community.

Suffering helps strengthen you as a person and is not to be confused with further victimization. Acceptance of harsh punishment, such as going to jail for a just cause, helps the individual and the movement grow in spiritual and humanitarian dimensions.

Suffering for a just cause shows the opponents that they are not the issue. You have chosen to suffer the consequences to show the larger issue and you are working for a better future.

Dr. King said that you can't live to the fullest if you're not willing to die for something.

Principle Five : Avoid Internal Violence of the Spirit as Well as External Physical Violence

Our attitudes and the way we practice nonviolence is shown through our actions, which in turn are driven by our attitudes. Violence of the spirit saps our creative energy, robbing us of the strength of our moral position.

Dr. King stated "The Nonviolent Resistor not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him".

Body language, as well as verbal expressions, communicates our real feelings and thoughts about a particular situation. Internal conflicts and violence show through these expressions. Violence is not just physical harm, but mental and emotional as well. Verbal violence is the most common form of violence.

Presenting a clear picture is the objective of nonviolent direct action. If we react and become violent, by thought, word or deed, we cloud the picture, this sends a clouded message to those people watching the action.

Principle Six : The Universe is on the Side of Justice

Society has a sense of just order in the universe. Nonviolence holds to this concept, and the movement must show this for society to join in. Nonviolence has faith in each person involved in the conflict and believes that positive change can occur. Good will defeat evil.

Every person, deep down, is opposed to wrong and unjust behavior. Given our understanding of the problem, we must never lose hope that human beings, even our opponents, can change.

No one is an island. Every injustice can be viewed as a cancer dangerous to the whole, which means it could become dangerous to us. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.