

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr: The Power of Nonviolent Action (Cultures of Peace)

Mary King



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Mahatma Gandhi started his adult life as a shy law student, yet he went on to provide dynamic leadership for eight historic struggles--including the independence of India from British colonialism, against the caste system, and to counter the maltreatment of women. Through his grasp of the power of Truth, Gandhi experimented with building justice, human rights, and democracy in a manner that would leave no bitterness--always the legacy of violence. Martin Luther King, Jr, neither seeking nor wanting leadership, had to be cajoled into becoming the leader of a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, that would change the face of the United States.

The success of the Gandhian strategies that King adopted made him, ultimately, the moral leader of his country and resulted in one of the world's foremost documents on nonviolent struggle. For decades prior to King's emergence, however, African-American leaders had traveled to India to meet with Gandhi and learn his techniques for wielding the power that left no thirst for revenge.

Tutors came to Montgomery, persuaded King to put down his gun, and taught him Gandhi's insights into revolutionary nonviolence. Transmitted mostly by word of mouth, the wisdom of Gandhi and King has been employed successfully by any number of peoples and recent popular movements--including the Poles, East German, Czechs and Slovaks, the Burmese, Palestinians, Guatemalans, and Thais. Nonviolent struggle places in effective balance both ethics and practicality, and as a result of its contemporary use, military manuals, political lexicons, and world maps have had to be revised. This book looks at nonviolent political strategy and change in the twentieth century by chronicling the words of Gandhi and King. It is written by political scientist Mary King, herself a participant for four years at the center of the American civil rights movement, who in 1988 won a Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Book award for her book *Freedom Song*.

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