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# CLOUD OF WITNESSES: VOICES ON NONVIOLENCE

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We must become midwives in order to give birth to the liberating force of nonviolence which already exists in the people.

- **Hildegard Goss-Mayr**

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Nonviolence is really tough. You don't practice nonviolence by attending conferences – you practice it on the picket lines.

- **Cesar Chavez**

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Resistance to Tyranny is Obedience to God

- **Susan B. Anthony**

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It is through disobedience that progress is made.

- **Oscar Wilde**

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You can make tyranny helpless by refusing cooperation with it.

- **Gene Sharp**

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I may be arrested. I may be tried and thrown into jail, but I will never be silent.

- **Emma Goldman**

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We have to remember that God loves all people... We must love the jailor as well as the one in prison. We must do that seemingly utterly impossible thing: love our enemy

- **Dorothy Day**

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True Christians do not know vengeance, no matter how they are mistreated... And they do not break their peace, even if they should be tempted by bondage, torture, poverty...but with Christ they supplicate and pray: God, forgive them for they know not what they do.

- **Menno Simons**

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When they come for the innocent without crossing your body, cursed be your religion and your life.

- **Unknown**

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When that which is IMMORAL is the only thing which is LEGAL, then that which is ILLEGAL has become the only thing which is MORAL.

- **John Stoner**  
**CPT Steering Committee**

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The Gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves...All killing has ceased with them.

- **Conrad Grebel**

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

- **Margaret Mead**

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Gandhi once declared that it was his wife who unwittingly taught him the effectiveness of nonviolence. Who better than women should know that battles can be won without resort to physical strength? Who better than we should know all the power that resides in non-cooperation?

- **Barbara Deming**  
**Revolution & Equilibrium**

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Nonviolent Direct Action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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Ralph: What are you doing in jail?

Henry: What are you doing out of jail?

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson to Henry David Thoreau while imprisoned for refusal to pay taxes for the Mexican War.**

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A nation that has chosen to live under the nuclear umbrella is in no position to complain that the sunshine of compassion and truth is not beaming through its society.

- **John Stoner, October 1998**

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Whenever you take a stand for truth and justice, you are liable to scorn. Often you will be called an impractical idealist or a dangerous radical. Sometimes it might mean going to jail. If such is the case you must honorably grace the jail with your presence.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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Nonviolent defense requires not only willingness to risk one's life. It requires renunciation of all claims to special privileges and power at the expense of other people.

- **David Dellinger**

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We are in for a very, very long haul...I am asking for everything you have to give. You will lose your youth, your sleep, your patience, your sense of humor and occasionally...the understanding and support of people that you love very much. In return, I have nothing to offer you but...all the dreams you've ever had for your children and your grandchildren...your future, and the certain knowledge that at the end of your days you will be able to look back and say that once in your life you gave everything you had for justice.

- **Jill Ruckelshaus**  
**1977 National Women's Convention**

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The choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is between nonviolence and nonexistence.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.

- **Mohandas Gandhi**

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The most effective weapon to maintain a people in captivity is to capture their imagination.

- **Lilia Solano**  
**Colombian Theologian**

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The first thing to be disrupted by our commitment to nonviolence will be not the system but our own lives.

- **Jim Douglass**

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This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do **something** and do it very well. It may be incomplete, but that is the difference between the master builder and the workers. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

- **Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero**

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Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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Once people understand the strength of nonviolence – the force it generates, the love it creates, the response it brings from the total community – they will not easily abandon it.

- **Cesar Chavez**

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I am prepared to die but there is no cause for which I am prepared to kill.

- **Mahatma Gandhi**

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Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of the spirit. You not only refuse to shoot someone, but you refuse to hate them.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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**Civil Disobedience** is not our problem. Our problem is **civil obedience**. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders...and millions have been killed because of this obedience...Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity and war and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves...and the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem.

- **Howard Zinn**

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Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us. It is not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And, as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

- **Marianne Williamson**  
"A Return to Love" pp. 188-189

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Nonviolence has the unique ability to simultaneously accept and reject – to acknowledge and connect us with that which is valuable in a person at the same time as it resists and challenges that person's oppressive attitude or behavior.

- **Jane Meyerding**

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It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

- **Robert F. Kennedy**

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We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we cannot in good conscience obey your unjust laws...And in winning our freedom, we will win you in the process.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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By our refusal to cooperate, we keep reminding them of our dissent, refusing to allow them the godlike sense that their will alone exists.

- **Barbara Deming**

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Only when we can visualize a world without weapons can we find the path to it.

- **Elise Boulding**

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Nonviolence doesn't always work – but violence never does.

- **Madge Micheels-Cyrus**

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What is our responsibility in the creation of a more just and peaceful world? Our response might best be summed up by the word "**accompaniment**:" to deviate from other pathways for awhile (and then forever) to walk with those on the margins, to be with them, to let go. Through this encounter with Christ at the margins, we as individuals and societies experience a profound, ongoing, spirit-led conversion of heart, soul and mind. Slowly our centers of gravity move outside of ourselves and we find ourselves suddenly dancing with friends in unknown places and with great joy.

- from **St. Francis and the Foolishness of God**

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Arrested	-	January 26, 1956
Home Bombed	-	January 30, 1956
Home Bombed	-	January 27, 1957
Arrested	-	September 3, 1958
Stabbed	-	September 20, 1958
Arrested	-	February 17, 1960
Arrested	-	October 19, 1960
Arrested	-	December 16, 1961
Arrested	-	March, 1963
Arrested	-	May, 1964
Beaten	-	August 5, 1966
Jailed	-	November 27, 1967
Assassinated	-	April 4, 1968

So that you could sleep in every year on January 15.

*On Martin Luther King Day (January 15), take a few moments to reflect on the life of a man whose job had no holidays; whose work and dedication left us with much more than a three-day weekend.*

