

Six Steps of Nonviolent Social Change handout

The Six Steps of Nonviolent Social Change are based on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s non-violent campaigns and teachings that emphasise love in action. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence, as reviewed in the Six Principles of Nonviolence, guides these steps for social and interpersonal change.

Information gathering: To understand and articulate an issue, problem or injustice facing a person, community, or institution, you must do research. You must investigate and gather all vital information from all sides of the argument or issue to increase your understanding of the problem. You must become an expert on your opponent's position.

Education: It is essential to inform others, including your opposition, about your issue. This minimises misunderstandings and gains your support and sympathy.

Personal commitment: Daily check and affirm your faith in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Eliminate hidden motives and prepare yourself to accept suffering, if necessary, in your work for justice.

Discussion/negotiation: Using grace, humour and intelligence, confront the other party with a list of injustices and a plan for addressing and resolving these injustices. Look for what is positive in every action and statement the opposition makes. Do not seek to humiliate the opponent but to call forth the good in the opponent.

Direct action: These are actions taken when the opponent is unwilling to enter into, or remain in, discussion/negotiation. These actions impose a "creative tension" into the conflict, supplying moral pressure on your opponent to work with you in resolving the injustice.

Reconciliation: Nonviolence seeks friendship and understanding with the opponent. Nonviolence does not seek to defeat the opponent. Nonviolence is directed against evil systems, forces, oppressive policies, unjust acts, but not against persons. Through reasoned compromise, both sides resolve the injustice with a plan of action. Each act of reconciliation is one step close to the 'Beloved Community.'