

May 2014

## Self-control helps people avoid violence

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### Recommended Citation

Thomas, Zoe (2014) "Self-control helps people avoid violence," *Verbum*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 19.  
Available at: <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol11/iss2/19>

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## Self-control helps people avoid violence

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"When Martin Luther King Jr spoke these words, he was addressing the masses of mainly Black Americans who were fighting for freedom from discrimination and for the right to be treated as equally as any other human being. The struggle was long and hard. They had to endure abuse from the white men around them, who felt that they did not deserve to have equal rights. This was a struggle that easily erupted into physical violence. The white men fought the blacks and the blacks fought back. However, Dr. King was an advocate for peace and also a civil rights leader. He had to reassure his followers that this fight could only be won if done peacefully. In the quote above, he uses the word 'rise' which suggests that we are a better person or we are placing ourselves above the man who cannot use soul force instead of physical force. He was adamant in his position. Although he did not live to see the laws being passed, the battle was eventually won. Nevertheless even if these words applied to the situation at the time, his words should still live on. His words should be considered by everyone, no matter the race because violence is not bias to race. Everyone should always think about approaching any situation in a peaceful manner because it always brings about the best results."



*Zoé Thomas*

## **Self-control helps people avoid violence**

**“We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”**

(From Dr. Martin Luther King Junior’s “I have a dream” speech)

When Martin Luther King Jr spoke these words, he was addressing the masses of mainly Black Americans who were fighting for freedom from discrimination and for the right to be treated as equally as any other human being. The struggle was long and hard. They had to endure abuse from the white men around them, who felt that they did not deserve to have equal rights. This was a struggle that easily erupted into physical violence. The white men fought the blacks and the blacks fought back. However, Dr. King was an advocate for peace and also a civil rights leader. He had to reassure his followers that this fight could only be won if done peacefully. In the quote above, he uses the word 'rise' which suggests that we are a better person or we are placing ourselves above the man who cannot use soul force instead of physical force. He was adamant in his position. Although he did not live to see the

laws being passed, the battle was eventually won. Nevertheless even if these words applied to the situation at the time, his words should still live on. His words should be considered by everyone, no matter the race because violence is not bias to race. Everyone should always think about approaching any situation in a peaceful manner because it always brings about the best results.

When we really think about it, people resort to violence because it is the easy way out. It is the first thing our body tells us to do in conflicting situations due to the production of adrenaline. Hence, our blood pressure rises, our heart beats faster and our breathing rate increases. These are not the responses our body makes if we are peacefully discussing something. Therefore, without thinking it through, or practicing self-control, we easily resort to the quickest response our minds can think of. But in the end, what does it do? Does it solve our issues? Do we or the other party feel better? Should we consider that maybe slow and steady does win the race? In this case, it does. We can take into consideration the Freedom Riders who boycotted the buses, and walked miles to their destination in a nonviolent manner to stand up for their cause. These actions took decades to produce positive results, but Blacks were able to ride the buses in an unsegregated manner. What about the college students who sat in restaurants in white only areas, took abuse for a long period of time before desegregation laws were passed in restaurants and other places? They are the epitome of self-control. Therefore, we can rise above and practice self-control because, although the process is longer, the results are better.

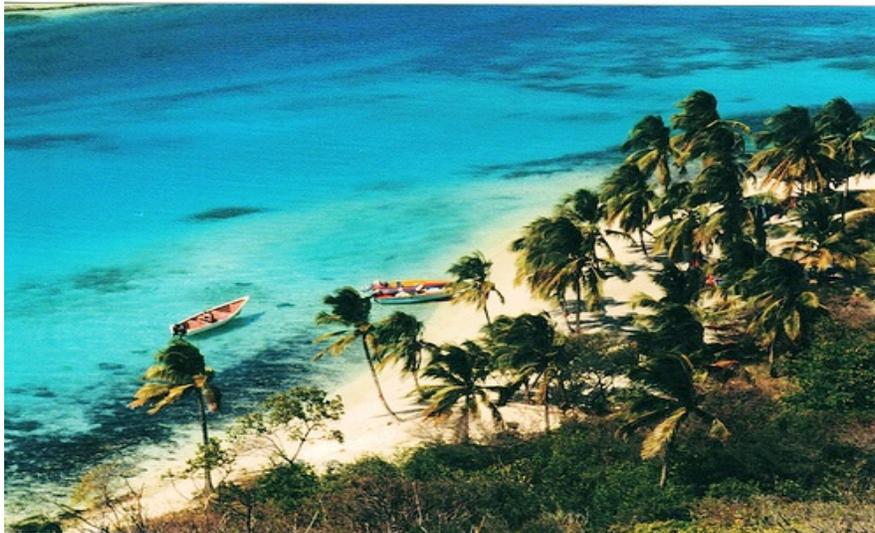
Also, when we use physical force, there is a breakdown in communication. This results in an ineffective transfer of the message that was being relayed. Hence, there is a waste in all this physical energy and no satisfaction to compensate it. Think about an everyday situation in which we might disagree with one another, which might evolve into an argument. The two parties are loud, aggressive and are not listening. This basically means that the receivers do not get the message effectively. Therefore, the issues would not be resolved if no one can hear what the issues really are. It might have been better to just be quiet. However, if the two parties sat and talked it out

reasonably, the one person can hear the other and possibly come to a compromise. If Dr. King and his followers had burnt buildings and harmed people, it would have been difficult for white citizens looking on or even authoritative figures to perceive the cause they were fighting for. The message relayed would have been that they were destructive and they needed to be thrown in jail. A peaceful protest might not have stopped Dr. King and his followers from going to jail, but they could not be at fault because they were not doing any wrong.

In addition, we must also consider that most times, when we speak out, we do it for good. Dr. King was standing up for a good cause that if sought through would have a great positive impact on blacks and whites. No one, no matter the person, should be denied the good. Hence, when he became a leader for the Blacks, he wanted the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people. He wanted as much people to survive the cause, since the more in number makes it stronger. Hence, if they had acted out violently, they risked losing their people, and the loss of people weakens the cause. In addition, if they had acted out violently, they would therefore harm others and this harm would have negated the amount of good that they were trying to spread in the first place.

Since violence seems like the easy way out, physical force can be out into creative thoughts to handle situations in a better way. So how do we go about it? How do we convert our physical force to soul force? The word soul refers to a person's moral or emotional nature or sense of identity. The important word here is moral. Dr. King remained moral when he fought for the rights of Blacks by staying true to himself. Next time you are faced with a confrontation, turn and walk away. Walk away because it is the moral thing to do. Consider that you would not want anyone to harm you, and therefore, you should not harm anyone, even if they deserved it. Convert the physical force of using your mouth, to not using it at all and making an even bigger statement. We can convert the physical force of our hands, to social media on the internet and fight for a cause. In my case, I am using my physical force to gain a good education. This good education will put me in a better place in life so I can go back to my home country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and help the people there.

In conclusion, when we go out and face different challenges, we should always remember “self-control.” Practice it and use it. It is the only way to be effective. Remember that Dr. King, who was living in a challenging world, did not compromise his morality, but stuck it out passively. Think about the accomplishments we feel when we put our efforts into something, being hopeless at times, suddenly turn around and change to our advantage. The accomplishments are more rewarding because they are unexpected. Therefore, when we are confronted with tough situations and we are ready to conform and physically fight, let's stop; let our mind rise above our body, practice self-control, think, and make the situation better for us and the others.



*A view of St. Vincent*