

The March from Selma to Montgomery  
and the Nonviolent Movement in Analysis

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United States

Violence and nonviolence are the birthmarks of the soul; moments of violent upheaval creating psychic fissures and splits that form the landscape from which the personality will flourish. The variants in the landscape are titrated by active nonviolent moments; experiences folded into a determination to live, guided by life's rhythms, both inner and outer. Violence and nonviolence form the syzygy of nature herself; their inextricable, serpentine flow informing the intra-psychic struggle; the dynamism from which the mythopoeic narrative of life emerges. Nonviolent *activism* is an external and *internal* spiritual warfare. It is the sword baring feminine function of the psyche that cuts into unmediated aggression and violence, revealing the nonviolent potential for peace therein. The depth of this dynamic process is defined within the psyches of participants whose levels of self-related consciousness provide the vital nutrient for change.

As a practiced ethos, nonviolence sits on a spectrum with tactical and strategic principles on one end and philosophical, transpersonal on the other. And while many practitioners can strategically participate, few can hold both ends of the spectrum. The Selma marches provide a unique look into the emergence of archetypal nonviolence through the self's synthetic movement in a community and nation in the throes of an adaptive identity crisis.

The Selma campaign sits at the apex of the nonviolent civil rights movement, the achievement of a ten-year pilgrimage driven by Martin Luther King, Jr. and his colleagues. From January to March 1965, King and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee worked the town of Selma, Alabama, like a

finely tuned instrument. Harnessing their grief and a passivity that enabled marginalized African Americans to survive the historical abuse of whites, protestors learned to nonviolently, *actively* engage this passivity by confronting the racist factions upholding a corrupt voting rights system, and through enactments of racism, make the unobservable shadow, observable. Voting registration days became protests shaped of nonviolent trickery designed to get the town's sheriff, James Clark, to do what King called "tip his hand," or act out his racist ways so that the media's camera could witness and broadcast the events live to the nation.

Mark Kurlansky, in his book *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (2006), states that "while every major language has a word for violence, there is no word to express the idea of nonviolence" (p. 5). Gandhi (1962) states that the closest terminology to nonviolence comes from the Sanskrit word *ahimsa*. "*Ahimsa* is a derivative of the word *himsa*, which means to harm. *Ahimsa* is the complete absence of violence in word and even thought as well as action" (p. xxv). *Ahimsa* is a philosophical, spiritual stance that is evolutionary in nature and can never truly be achieved (Kurlansky, 2006; Gandhi, 1962). "Nonviolence is a perfect stage. It is a goal towards which all humanity moves naturally, though unconsciously" (Gandhi, 1962, p. xxv).

In the Chinese language, the word closest to nonviolence is *teh*. "In Taoism, there is a concept embodied in the *teh*. Not exactly nonviolence, which is an active force, *teh* is the virtue of not fighting—nonviolence is the path to *teh*." (Kurlansky, 2006, p. 11). The term that comes closest to nonviolence is the

Islamic term *jihad*, which means "nonviolent activism;" to strive with great intensity for a relationship with Allah. Unfortunately, the internal struggle is misunderstood as an outer goal of converting the other to Islam, in the name of God. In its essence, however, the word *jihad* supports the journey of nonviolent activism or the process of individuation (Kurlansky, 2006).

Gandhi's term *satyagraha* means actively seeking and holding onto the truth, or consciousness (Gandhi, 1962, p. xxiv). *Satyagraha* is an active stance, a holding of the tension of opposing psychic forces of conscious to unconscious states, where *ahimsa* is a stance against violence in thought, word, and deed. Essentially, nonviolence is a feminine practice that has the potential to transform time and space, bridging what Jung referred to as the "spirit of the times" with the "spirit of the deep" transmuting through aggression, splits both current and transgenerational.

By the time the patient arrives in the consulting room, they have likely endured years of suffering inflicted by an oppressive inner other whom they are convinced lives outside of themselves. It is a suffering so engrained that the patient has yet to define him- or herself as a person of free will, able to individuate from and in relationship to their personal shadow. As a devoted satyagrahi, the analyst is trained to contain the patient's suffering without inflicting violence on the patient's sacred self. It is an *active* activism, a body-mind, conscious to unconscious tension bearing experience designed to consistently mediate the inner other who oppresses the patient's ego, occluding the inner potential embedded deep within the shadow complex. Each

consultation lays bare the patient's desire for an inner democracy of truth and self-love.

Although this process causes violent eruptions within the ego, it does not damage the patient's soul but instead stimulates the ego/self-relationship. Holding the tension of opposites, the analyst's hermetic capacity fortifies the creative stance of activism, enabling the analyst to challenge projections, explore fantasies and nourish the imagination emergent in the third, the *tao* of healing. The analyst's capacity to work through countertransference feelings (violent and nonviolent) offered up by the patient serves to develop the analyst's humanity as well. Gandhi's tenets of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* are the central tenets that sit alongside King's six philosophical tenets and form the fingerprint of archetypal nonviolence delivered to America via the Civil Right movement. In sum, King's six tents state that:

*“Nonviolence is not a passive nonresistance against evil, but an active, nonviolent resistance to evil”* (King, 1958, p. 90). *“Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding”* (p. 91); *“Nonviolence is directed at the forces of evil, but not those who happen to be doing the evil”* (p. 90); *The nonviolent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it* (p. 92), and *“nonviolence avoids not only external but internal violence”* (p. 92). Finally, *“nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice”* (p. 92), a notion which is similar to Jung's transcendent function. These tenets practiced consistently for

years before Selma provided integrity to the alchemical vessel that Selma would become.

### The Eightfold Path of Nonviolence

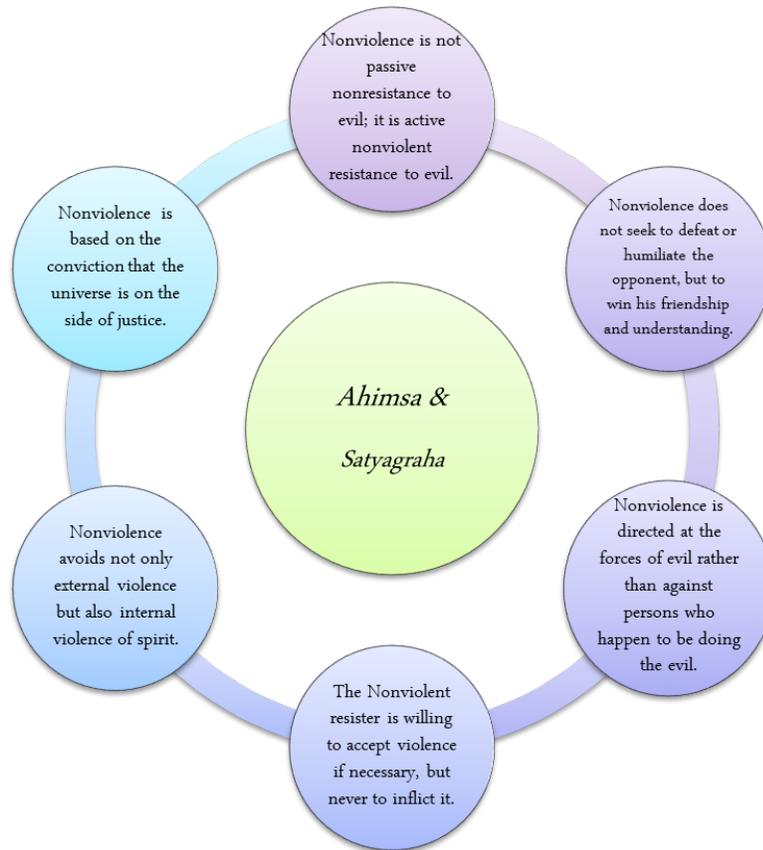


Image 1

Campaigns for truth and a nonviolent, conscious life are defined and driven by the failures and successes of any inner battle; indeed, the inner battle becomes the outer battle when unawareness, hubris, and suffering become too unbearable. Psychic defenses and the ego's need to maintain control over the

wounded, vulnerable inner other can trap the ego in obstinance, driven to maintain a position of power at all costs. In the outer world, this can become exceedingly painful as the battle for the survival of the "old way" is usurped by the self's imperative demanding change from the inside. Those who could deliver the seeds of consciousness into the collective became the carriers of the dream and the transgenerational agents of change; many willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause. As America witnessed her shadow side, demand for reconciliation sparked embers of rebellion in cities across the nation.

Three nodal points in the Selma campaign defined the shifting of the national landscape leading to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, all taking place on the Edmund Pettus bridge: Bloody Sunday, Turn Around Tuesday, and the final crossing into Montgomery. In each crossing attempt, the two sides of the split met; both sides carriers of the racist complex, both cultural and personal, each side containing the oppressed other whose identities were shaped by their individual and transgenerational wounds of slavery.

Blacks defined one half of the split, the oppressed slave whose very souls depended on an immediate reconciliation. Whites shaped the other half of the divide defined by historical power and abuse. Both sides were defensively armed with economic, psychological, and emotional reasons for their positions, transgenerationally defined by chattel slavery, the Civil War, and reconstruction. More importantly, both sides carried the solution to racism should it become accessible through the alchemical procedure of nonviolent shadow integration.

Whereas the archetypal master-slave relationship is ruled by oppression, violence, and dependency, its compensatory shadow is the dream delivered, in this case, through the vote, the image of freedom, the architect of new psychic life. However, On Bloody Sunday, the troopers blocked the marchers' first attempt at Montgomery, the abusive master's hubris unwilling still to reflect and supplicate to the nonviolent truth Bloody Sunday held. The images of brutalized marchers being gassed and beaten by state troopers were broadcast nationally. Consequently, Bloody Sunday shaped the image of the change needed.



*Image 2 Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965*



*Image 3 Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965*



*Image 4 Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965*

The rage from this event catalyzed the national call for another march by King. Ostensibly, two days later, a second attempt to bridge crossing became known as Turn Around Tuesday, March 9, 1965.



*Image 5 Turnaround Tuesday*

Violence and nonviolence shapeshift in unexpected ways, which can create a whiplash effect, nonviolence peeling open the depths of the complex constellating murderous rage which cannot be contained. Such was the case in the loss of lives in Selma: Jimmie Lee Jackson, Reverend James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo, these losses subsequently occurring at the beginning, middle, and end of the march.

On Turn Around Tuesday, King, risking further death and retaliation, negotiated a covert agreement with the government not to march to Montgomery. However, King would also openly defy the government and its injunction forbidding the march by telling his followers that he would march no matter what. Indeed, King was caught in a double bind. By marching, he betrayed the government and its federal order, while turning around on the bridge would betray the movement. Indeed, not crossing would be viewed by all as a supplication, once again, to the master. In the end, King's steely determination and trickster ways left an open ambivalence in which he stated to the government that he would attempt to turn around but could not guarantee that his people would follow (Kotz, 2005, pp. 289-291).

On Turn Around Tuesday, over two thousand marchers found their way to the center of the bridge guided by the song "We Shall Overcome." After addressing the state troopers, the marchers silently kneeled and openly prayed. Then, at King's prompting, the group turned around, following back across the bridge into Selma, as the troopers subsequently cleared the road to Montgomery, thus constellating in King the archetypal image of the hero turned martyr (Garrow, 1978, p. 405).

President Lyndon Johnson, a Southerner himself, carried the suffering of racism in his personal history. He wanted legislation passed, albeit on government time. However, Johnson, too, was in a double bind. In supporting the marches, he risked that any deaths would be blamed on him, the injunction's committed infraction, thus ruling him powerless. If he did not support the

movement, the marchers, disobeying a federal injunction, risked more violence and death, in which case he would also be blamed. Indeed, King and Johnson were shadows of each other, each reflecting their egoic positions of a need for power while also holding the tension of archetypal democracy that set the stage to change the nation. For the archetypal relationship of master/slave to shift, each had to trust one another, implicitly supplicating power to relatedness, aggression transmuted through trust.

In *The Book of Symbols* (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, 2010), the bridge is noted as a symbol of spiritual union: "Psyche appears to support the separation of conscious from the unconscious, but also a bridging that brings them into creative relationship" (p. 626). By walking across the bridge and holding a meditative, prayerful vigil, King was neither breaking the law by marching nor cooperating with evil by not marching. He simply held the tension of third, not knowing what to do, and by that action bridged what, until that moment in time, were two splits in culture. The African American won the government's support, and the law enforcement officials, choosing not to retaliate, won the support of the nation. The moment of silence on the bridge ushering in a new paradigm, a creative act engendered by the collective unconscious. Weeks later, the marchers would make their way to Montgomery with the protection of the national guard.



*Image 5 The Edmund Pettus Bridge*

Similarly, the process of bridging between the ego and the self occurs analytically for the patient who is on their own journey of activism (individuation). The defenses which blind and bind the patient to their behaviors effectively crumbles as the analyst holds the mirror up to their shadow complex. Thus, moving forward in a new way can mean a particular kind of paralysis or egoic destruction/reconstruction is being offered up by the unconscious, catalyzing through the double bind, a surrender to the self, a path of *teh*. The softness of an inner vulnerability overcomes a calcified position, opening the way to Montgomery.

It is today, sixty years later, that the alchemical opus has come full circle. Once named after the Grand dragon of the KKK, the Edmund Pettus bridge is due to become the John Lewis Bridge, the result of the thousands of marchers' desire to dream King's "beloved community" into being. While mired in violence, their nonviolence efforts bear a continued examination and scrutiny as an ethos vital to our existential existence.

In an analysis, the individual's activism journey is a series of bridge crossings, with the analyst holding the nonviolent philosophical tension of the opposites while implementing tactics that emerge uniquely in the third. Nonviolence provides the path within which the patient and analyst find the bridging, together, thus mediating the violent waters of the unconscious with nonviolence, building, once again, a hopeful, fuller experience of life as the patient walks home to Montgomery guided by their true north, the Self.

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## Photos

Image #1: The Eightfold Path of Nonviolence; the tenets of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Image #2: Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965; Spider Martin Archives, University of Texas Austin, Texas

Image #3: Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965; Spider Martin Archives,  
University of Texas Austin, Texas

Image #4: Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965; Spider Martin Archives,  
University of Texas Austin, Texas

Image #5: The Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Alabama;  
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