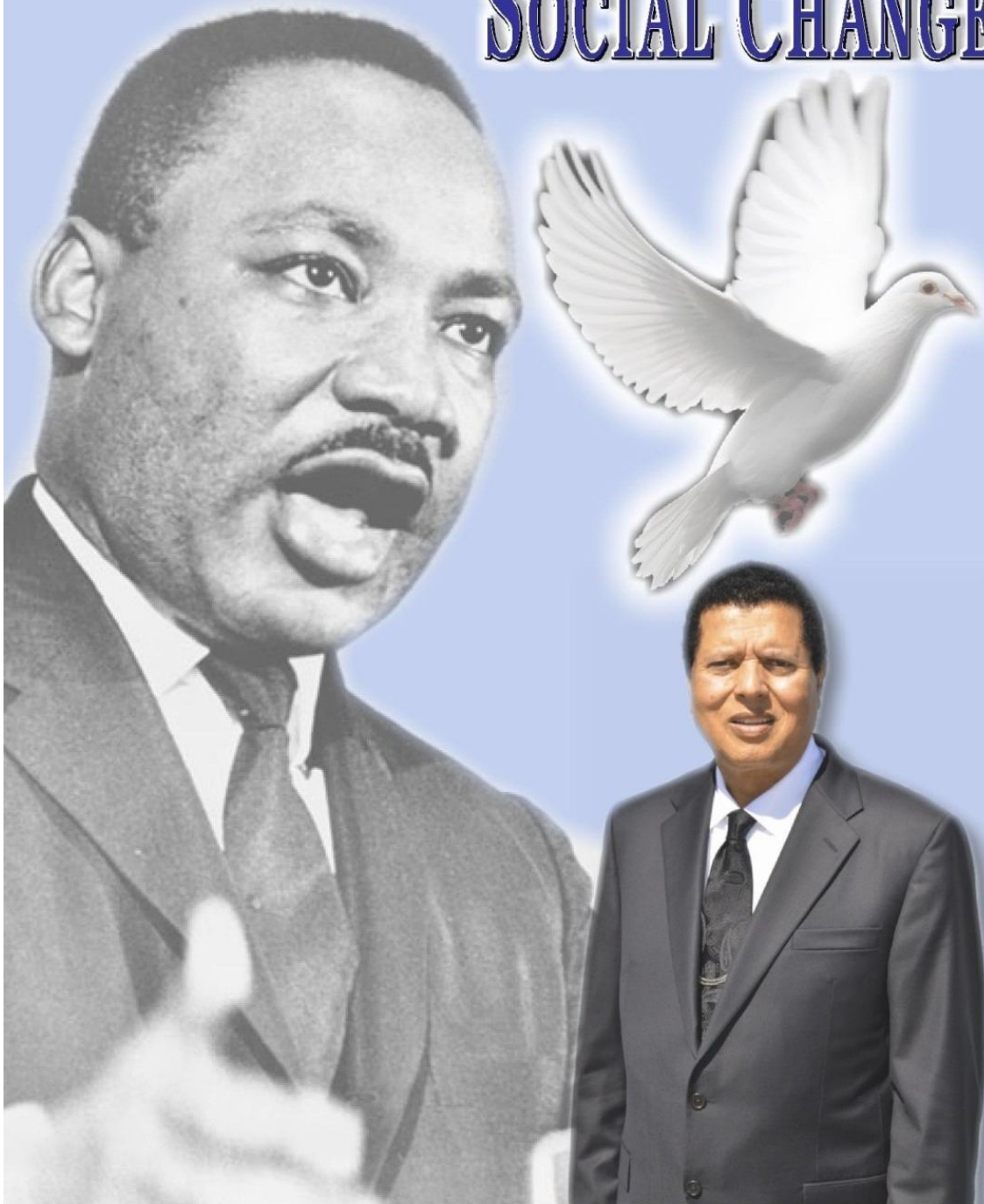


DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S  
PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENT  
DIRECT ACTION CAN BE USED FOR

# SOCIAL CHANGE



Written By **Reverend Dr. Lorenzo Carlisle**

This book is dedicated to my mother Mae Lizer Carlisle, my father Judge Carlisle, my mother in-law Bobbie Lee Hairston, my wife Pamela J. Carlisle, my sons Ronnie Fasion, Mark D. Carlisle M.D., and members, partners of the church I pastor, "Faith Healing Prayer Deliverance Christian Center"

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## Introduction

This book was written and submitted to, The Chicago Theological Seminary, faculty on May 24, 1989, to complete my candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry. The subject of non-violence direct action grows out of me and others watching and praying for the safety of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1955 myself and other Negroes of the deep south became caught up in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. For example, in 1960 I organized a successful boycott against Academy Street High School cafeteria in Troy, Alabama for better food. We the Negro students were moved and motivated by the leadership of Dr. King. Dr. King became a driving force in my life. As a result, over the years I have found the principles of non-violence to be an effective method of persuasion and communication.

At this time in history I am publishing and releasing my work on the subject of non-violence in conjunction with a call for civil disobedience.

The Republican Party and the Tea Party have stated publicly that their first order of business in 2011 is the call for hearings to Impeach President Obama. The objective of these hearings are to put President Obama on the defense, humiliate him before the world, strip him of his dignity, destroy his reputation, discredit him as commander and chief and to bring public shame to him and his family.

On November 6, 2010, while in prayer, God told me to call for a non-violent army of 3 million people to support President Obama." Lorenzo, call for a non-violent army of 3 million people. Lorenzo, use Joshua 6:1-5, my son call for a circle of prayer around Washington, DC. Lorenzo, call for seven days in the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. Lorenzo, call for seven days of forgiveness. My son, call for seven days of healing. Lorenzo, call for seven days of civil disobedience. Lorenzo, stand for seven days and I will free Obama from the lion's den," the lord said.

I am in Faith that the work completed to satisfy the faculty at  
The Chicago Theological Seminary, for my Doctor of Ministry will be a  
blessing to all who read it.

May God Bless You,  
Reverend Dr. Lorenzo Carlisle

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Dr. Martin Luther King Junior's Philosophy of NON-VIOLENCE:  
DIRECT ACTION CAN BE USED FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

QUESTION

The question before us is can non-violent direct action be used for social change? I am not only persuaded by the historical example of the Montgomery bus boycott which ended transportation segregation in that city for Black people. I am also convinced from the experience I have had in the 1980's with the First Universe Baptist Church and the homeless people who lived there in the church mission, that non-violent direct action is and effective method to use for social change.

AUDIENCE

This paper is written primarily to non-violent actionists who organize persons to take part in non-violent direct action for social change. The story, or example, which I am using centers on a Black Baptist Church which ran a mission for the homeless in the City of Oakland. The fact that this non-violent struggle involved a black church whose mission housed 250 homeless people is incidental. The philosophy of non-violent direct action could have been used on a picket line against and unjust employer; or at the gate of a nuclear power plant; on a college campus to eliminate racism; against a city government who refuses the rights of persons with Aids; or on the step of the White House in support of funds for persons who are addicted to a drug called crack.

I am saying to non-violent direct actionist that this non-violent struggle could have taken place in Chicago, New York, Atlanta, of any other city. In short, the philosophy on non-violent direct action an its methods that will

unfold during this story are inherited in the process of non-violent direct action. There are some things within the application of non-violent direct action that are universal. For example, some persons or groups' consciousness are raised whenever non-violent direct action takes place. Also, there is some kind of demand or request put forward by the non-violent direct action participants whenever there is a non-violent struggle.

The purpose of this paper is to share the story of the First Universe Baptist Church with other non-violent direct actionists.

Whereas the objectives we sought during this non-violent struggle may be new to most non-violent direct actionist, the means we used to obtain our objectives and demand are not new. However it is the writer's opinion that this story will offer other non-violent direct actionists insight which may be helpful to them in future non-violent direct action struggles. The concept of non-violent direct action is applicable to most non-violent causes because persons can be trained to take part in non-violent direct action. However, I believe that the church lends itself toward the philosophy of non violence than most sectual institutions because of its faith base. Non-violent direct action demands that one has faith in people and God. Although this paper is written for other non-violent direct actionists and the black church is an incidental focus. I believe that this paper would be educational to pastors and others who are interested in working for social change.

#### THE STORY OF FIRST UNIVERSE BAPTIST CHURCH

In December of 1984, I was an organizer for the Bay Area Free South Africa Movement (BAFSAM). They asked me to help find a headquarters for the



organization, insisting that our headquarters be in a Black church in East Oakland, the heart of the Black community.

One Monday morning, I met with Pastor James L. Brice of the First Universe Baptist Church as he was coming out of the office. I told him that I was with BAFSAM and needed to rent office space from his church. He responded by saying I sounded too anti-American and that the Black church had a Christian duty to fight communism. Pastor Brice attacked Africa and told me that Black people should be concerned about American issues. I told him that I was also a staff person for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

I became upset over his comments and started to leave but he insisted that I first go on a tour of his church. Despite the fact that he was a very reactionary person, I took a liking to him right away. I was impressed with the amount of property his church had and I was shocked to learn about 50 homeless people were staying on the site. I was impressed also by the love he showed for the homeless people at his church. I learned from this meeting that his church had been in bankruptcy court for two years and had no lawyer to represent the church. I then convinced BAFSAM that we needed this church for our headquarters no matter how long it took. After meeting with Pastor Brice for over two months, I convince him that BAFSAM would benefit him personally. As a result, he gave us the office space for free. Over the next few months Pastor Brice, and I became good friends and had lunch together daily.

Pastor Brice's love for the Black Church is unusual. This is understandable do to the fact that his father and grandfather were also Baptist preachers. I learned more about the Black church during this time that I had in 40 years I had been active in church. He became a strong supporter of BAFSAM

and joined its steering committee. As chairman of the Social Concern Committee of the Baptist Union, he moved his conservative group of 100 preachers into a progressive frame of mind. For example, as a result of Pastor Brice's new interest this conservative group of preachers took a greater interest in social problem that affected people in the Bay Area community. His church became the center of radical activity and drew concern from his congregation, the community, and the local leaders. Some of their concern grew out of the fact that Angela Davis, a leader in Communist Party, was a guest speaker at First Universal Baptist Church. I mention the appearance of Angela Davis at First Universe Baptist Church to demonstrate the radical transformation of Pastor Brice.

I gave him the first book of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Why We Can't Wait", as a gift because he questioned my logic for committing civil disobedience. He was adamant against the work I was doing which involved trying to stop the battleship Missouri from coming to San Francisco. Over the summer of 1985, I was able to convince Pastor Brice with sound arguments and information on military spending that my actions were needed and necessary. During this time also, he was sick. His sickness stemmed from trying to pay a note of \$5,000 per month on the church mortgage as well as trying to take care of the 50 homeless people living at his church.

Pastor Brice's complete trust in me came about when he learned, through several pastor, that I had threatened some of the city council members with a demonstration if they did not give the church some assistance for its homeless ministry. The city of Oakland was giving Mission Safe only \$3,000 a year. However, the treat of the protest got them a contract with the city at \$60,000

including salaries for a director and assistant director. The assistant director was Denise Gums a friend and co-worker with the AFSC. Denise brought many needed skills to Pastor Brice's homeless ministry. Pastor Brice also became somewhat anti-government and a strong supporter on non-violent protest. In short, Pastor Brice started questioning the role of the government and the Oakland political leaders. He was with me the night we shutdown the Oakland City Council for two hours and won full divestment from the city of Oakland on the issue of South Africa. At this council meeting Pastor Brice witnessed for the first time the power of non-violent direct action.

The event that really convinced him that non-violent protesting was a powerful means of social change, took place one morning when Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) threatened to turn off the church's electricity. In the past, PG&E would threaten to turn off the power and the pastor would plead for the time to pay the church's bill. This morning however I persuaded Pastor Brice that PG&E would not put homeless women and children living in the church in the dark. He invited PG&E to turn the electricity off and waited for two months before paying the church's bill. This victory over PG&E started Pastor Brice on a journey of non-violent resistance.

During the month of November 1985, Pastor Brice asked me what we could do to challenge the city of Oakland to address its homeless problem. I recommended to him that we should have a sleep-out for the homeless in February of 1986. During my semester break in December, 1985, I organized a meeting outlining this proposed sleep-out in which 60 organizers and activists took part. The sleep out was very successful and brought Pastor Brice an additional 200 homeless people to take care of. Mitch Snyder, a homeless activist from Washington,

D.C., spoke to sleep out participants on February 21, 1986, and told us that "its not just enough to come to demonstrations, to send checks, to write letters. People have got to roll up their sleeves and they're going to have to work together in order to get the job done." (1) The Rev. Jesse Jackson appeared before the sleepout participants on February 23, 1986 and brought us to our feet with these words, "When a baby cries at midnight because it doesn't have milk, it doesn't cry because of its sex, race, or religion, it cries in pain"(2). The appearance of Rev. Jesse Jackson, and Mitch Snyder helped in making the sleep-out successful.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The non-violent methods of Dr. King were intentionally used by the First Universe Baptist Church and the homeless community in their struggle against the Oakland City Council. The philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the method he used during the civil rights movement were used as a model by the First Universe Baptist Church and the homeless community during their campaign.

It is important at the out-set that the definitions of non-violent direct action and empowerment be given. "Non-violent direct action is a method of acting to rectify a social situation that is unjust and involves in it engaging and practical techniques that nullifies the use of violence or calls for non-violence at every point." (3) The above definition is by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Mission Safe's struggle was functioning within the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr's definition of non-violence because we were trying "to rectify a social situation that was unjust." For example, it was unjust and unfair that the City of Oakland did not try and provide some kind of shelter for its homeless citizens. It was also unfair and unjust that only one Black Church had

the responsibility of housing East Oakland's homeless citizens. Based on my experience, I believe empowerment is a transformation that takes place in the lives of the suffering masses once they recognize the God in them through non-violent struggling. One can get an idea of the transformation empowerment that took place in the life of the non-violent resisters from Pastor Brice. Pastor Brice stated publicly that as a result of committing civil disobedience on Good Friday in 1986, all fear left his body for the first time.

### A CONSCIOUS DECISION

After having worked with First Universe Baptist Church and the homeless people who were living in the church mission for several months, we consciously decided to engage in non-violent direct action against the Oakland City Council. The Oakland City Council was chosen for several reasons. First of all, there were over three thousand homeless people in the city of Oakland. Secondly, we wanted the city council to bail out First Universe Baptist Church's mission for the homeless from bankruptcy. Thirdly we wanted the city council to set aside ten million dollars for the homeless in our city. Once the decision was made to engage in non-violent direct action against the Oakland City Council, several objectives had to be accomplished and several means had to be used in order that we might accomplish our objectives and obtain our three demands against the Oakland City Council. The first objective was one of preparation in order to engage in non-violent direct action against the Oakland City Council. Our second objective was to get the attention of the council members. Our third objective was to win the respect and start a dialogue with the Oakland City Council. Our fourth was one of the empowerment for the non-violent

homeless resisters. Our fifth objective was to create a non-violent community at Mission Safe.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NON VIOLENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Our first objective was one of preparation in order to engage in non-violent direct action against the Oakland City Council.

There were at least 60 organizers and two hundred homeless people involved with the church' mission on a daily basis as result of the sleep out in February of 1986. There were three non-violent trainers who worked for the American Friends Service Committee and pastor James Brice who led the training in order to engage in non-violent direct action against the Oakland City Council. During our training Dr. King's non-violent direct action philosophy was taught as a model. We had been trying to create a homeless non-violent community at Mission Safe since the February sleep out, but the arrest of Pastor Brice on Good Friday, 1986 made the beloved community King spoke of seem possible at Mission Safe (4). Pastor Brice's arrest for the first time (for blocking the entrance of the Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Laboratory), left him and the two hundred homeless who witnessed his arrest, with a sense of empowerment. Pastor Brice stated publicly that as a result of committing civil disobedience on that Good Friday in 1986, all fear left his body for the first time. The Oakland Post on April 30, 1986 quoted part of Rev. Brice's speech before his first arrest against nuclear weapons. Rev. Brice stated "I understand \$800 million is spent every year on nuclear weapons at this laboratory alone. We are only asking for \$10 million to help the homeless." (5)

Here we are on Monday night in the social hall of the First Universe Baptist Church preparing to engage in non-violent direct action against the

Oakland City Council. We had entered this meeting wondering if the Mission Safe homeless community would response favorably to the question of engaging in non-violent direct action against the city council. Pastor Brice opened the meeting with a prayer. I could feel that the presence of God was coming over the room ad Pastor Brice finished praying by saying "in the name of Jesus". Pastor Brice shared with us his experience of being arrested on Good Friday. He said "You know I used to get close to a policeman and right away I became afraid, but now when I am near a policeman I don't even notice him." Pastor Brice by sharing his fears spoke of the purpose of non-violent training. Fear is counter productive in a non-violent direct action campaign and could lead to violent situations. Training in non-violence cultivated in the homeless people a willingness to overcome their fears (6).

During the training not one homeless person stated that he or she believed in the philosophy of non violence. Instead they stated phrases like: The city is wrong and we are with you Pastor Brice. In fact many of people stated that they did not believe in non violence but willing to stand with Pastor Brice. We stressed to the Mission Safe homeless community that that if the homeless community wanted to function as a united front in their community and before the city council, non-violent training was needed. If Mission Safe as a community wanted to behave non-violently in a confrontation with police officers the discipline of non-violent training could automatically make them respond non-violently (7). The homeless person who spoke out forcefully against non-violence had concerns to be addressed. We argued that Dr. King had proved that non violence was a weapon for the strong and it took more courage and discipline to confront an evil situation non-violently than in a violent frame of mind. (8)

It was further discussed that violence was a part of hate and evil and created disunity in the struggle for justice. To hate a person is to break the spirit of humanity and righteousness and to engage in non-violent direct action demands a preparation that is rooted in an agapeic empowering love. This agape love is so strong that it empowers a person to face a violent army in the name of Jesus (9).

After we argued about non violence being a weapon for the strong and not the weak, we asked the homeless community if there was anyone in the meeting who felt that he or she could not remain non-violent if struck by a violent police officer. To our surprise all agreed to accept violence from an officer without retaliation. We were concerned, however, because many of the homeless had served time in prison for violent crimes. For example, it was common knowledge that one homeless man had spent years in prison for killing a person. In fact, this person became the strongest non-violent resister in the Mission Safe community. He was arrested five times in a period of two months.

Part of the training involved in Mission Safe's community was to play the role of city council members and pretend to be arrested--this was a very important part of our training. Here, the community had an idea of what a nonviolent confrontation was like. This experience allowed the trainees and the trainers to see problems as they arose. It also permitted individual attention to the trainees' problems in the non-violent action itself. As a result of the role playing we were able to address the problems in advance of the non-violent direct action. The homeless at Mission Safe community already had a certain built-in unity because of their conditions. The community of Oakland had ignored its homeless class of people for seven years, stepping over the homeless



at bus stops, holding our noses when they came near us, and calling the homeless lazy when they solicited us for financial assistance. This treatment deepened their already isolated conditions of homelessness. The role playing brought a disciplined joy to their faces. To see Pastor Brice prepare men, women and children to confront the city power structure put hope in our network. We could see the powerful spirit of God as the children seemed to float through the role playing (10). This spirit gave us a new hope. The Mission Safe community became excited through the discipline of non-violence and could not wait to create a crisis for the Oakland City Council members.

#### CREATING A NON VIOLENT CRISIS

Our second objective was to get the attention of the council members. We had to use the means of creating a non-violent crisis in order to get the attention of the council members. Why create a crisis? Why not just ask the council members for their help? The First Universe Baptist Church had asked the city council to meet our demands. The council refused to put us on the agenda and retaliated by threatening to terminate the church's Mission contract with the city. A non-violent crisis would force the powerful opposition to notice the powerless non-violent resisters. The homeless non-violent resisters enjoyed the crisis because it allowed them the opportunity to witness the authorities suffer during the crisis.

This suffering that the powerful opposition experienced is called constructive non-violent tension (11). The homeless non-violent resister must make sure that this tension remains a part of the opposition or the threat of it remains until the powerful authorities meet his or her demands. A crisis demands that the world pay attention because during this time period no one knew

what the outcome would be. A crisis is a radical event or situation that no one can feel at peace with until it is over. A crisis forces the non participants to ask what is wrong and why are the people upset with their lives? (12) The objective of a non-violent crisis is to upset a community so much until its citizens ask why are there homeless people in our city and what can we do to help?

There is a big difference between a non-violent crisis and that of a crisis when a doctor is performing brain surgery on a patient. The patient did not plan the crisis, and the doctor and the patient would like to end the crisis as soon as possible. The non-violent crisis is a planned crisis and continues until the opposition meets the non-violent resisters' demands. In fact, coercion is used in most instances of non-violent crisis. It is fair to say without the use of coercive means, non-violent direct action would not be as successful (13). The Oakland City Council was spending less than \$200,000 a year on its homeless program before we created a crisis for them. We were demanding that the council give Mission Safe, the church mission, an interest free loan of \$600,000 and set aside ten million dollars for its homeless citizens. We expected the council to resist our demands, for several reasons. First of all, the homeless citizens were not a part of their budget, and secondly, any powerful government institution would resist a group of non voting citizens demanding ten million dollars. After the council refused our demands we started creating tension in their lives. For example, from April 22, 1986 until the end of July of 1986 the City Council members and the Oakland police department had "no rest" (14). We were arrested at five different city council meetings. In short the homeless non-violent resisters made it impossible for

the council to function as usual. For instance, when I say a non-violent crisis requires coercive means, the following is an example. We arrived an hour early for the city council meetings and occupied most of the seats on the first floor of city hall. When the regular weekly participants arrived, to their surprise the homeless men, women and children were occupying most of the seats. This was lawful action on the part of the homeless non-violent resisters but we intentionally did this to make their lives uncomfortable (15). Not only did we get there early and occupy the seats, we placed certain homeless resisters in seats near the council members. Mission Safe had only two bathrooms for its 250 residents and some residents never took a bath. This coercive means made it unpleasureable for the council members since they were seated near. They seemed to never stop coughing and taking short breaks.

The homeless non-violent resisters had certain built-in advances because of their homeless conditions. First, they had an unlimited amount of time and, secondly, they had nothing to lose and everything to gain. These two advantages became a source of power that the city council and Oakland police department could not deny. The fact that the homeless non-violent resisters were attending city council meetings each week was a crisis in itself. The overtime pay on a regular basis for the police department was creating a budget problem for the city. Going to jail was nothing new for the homeless resisters. In fact, most of them had had experiences with the law for less honorable crimes. The homeless non-violent resisters seemed to like the fact that they were bailed out of jail almost as soon as they were put in Jail. When the homeless non-violent resisters walked out of jail not only were they greeted by friends and supporters; the news media greeted them also with requests for interviews. This

kind of reception was an empowering experience and gave the homeless resisters a sense of "somebodyness."

Here we were the following Tuesday night, several hundred non-violent homeless resisters and supporters waiting for the city council to open its doors. Here stood a group of people who had nothing to lose, and time had no meaning in their lives at this point. Their hope rested in Pastor James Brice whom they knew had lost his home and most of his congregation because of his commitment to them. The media seemed to outnumber the people and all eyes were centered on this Texas preacher. The city council members were making their way through the crowd and the media just to speak to Pastor Brice. I thought then about the fact that only a few weeks ago we could not even get on the city council agenda and now the homeless non-violent resisters and their leader were greeted with respect. It took a non-violent crisis to achieve this kind of attention. As we gathered around the city hall steps to hear Pastor Brice speak he then began to pray. When the doors opened we all followed him into city hall and both floors were filled at once. The council set aside all business in order that Mission Safe non-violent homeless community could be heard first. The non-violent crisis accomplished its first objective which was respect from its powerful opposition.

#### LOCKED INTO AN EVIL STRUCTURE

Our third objective was to win the respect and start a dialogue with the Oakland City Council. In order to accomplish this we had to use the means of not seeing the council members as evil people but as people locked into an evil structure. Pastor Brice, as our leader, was helpful with this concern because he had respect for the city leadership and believed that every person was a

child of God. It was, to some of us, impossible to totally separate the city council members from the evil system they represented. (16) However, it was beneficial to the council and the homeless non-violent resisters that we saw the council members as children of God locked into a system of oppression. It seems fair to say that a city that falls asleep at night where women and children are sleeping in the rain is oppressive. Our non-violent direct action against the council was divinely inspired to liberate the homeless resisters from their oppression and to force the council to change its homeless program for Oakland homeless citizens.

If all persons are children of God then it is clear that the spirit of God is in all persons. The homeless non-violent resisters objective was to persuade the council into giving us our demands. As followers of the spirit we believed that the council was a part of a destructive system but as persons they could experience a conversion on the homeless issue. (17) In a non-violent direct action campaign the non-violent resisters' power rests in their faith in God! Therefore all things were possible in a struggle for justice and righteousness.

The homeless non-violent resisters hated their conditions and the system which ignored their situation. Who would not hate a city structure that gave tax breaks to any company who moved into its city but did not have a building to house its homeless people. As a result of creating a crisis it seemed for a while the homeless resisters were respected citizens. For example, over a period of two months no less than 60 homeless persons told their stories to the council. Not one homeless person showed any hate for council members. These stories would have moved the toughest hearts and minds. All of these homeless non-violent resisters were Black men, women and children, who were not born

homeless but were victims of situations beyond their control. The older persons told how they had worked for years with jobs in the Bay Area and as plant closures came about they had become homeless. Young men stated that they were working for the minimum wage and did not earn enough money to pay for a room or apartment. Single women with children explained to the council that they could not save enough for the deposit in order to rent a place to live in.

These stories came from the hearts and minds of former tax payers. These stories spoke to the souls of people; and moved our non-violent direct action struggle to a new level. No longer could the council and the public blame the homeless for their conditions. The Mission Safe homeless were saying to the council we are people too their slogan was "homeless but not helpless." As they chanted together it moved the crowd to an emotional high. The power of non-violent direct action was seen in the homeless resisters. They challenged the council members to give them good jobs and most of the homeless resisters gave copies of their resumes to council members. They visited council members in their offices and got to know them on a personal level. It is fair to say, had we trainers preached a message which indicated that the city council was evil we would not have gone as far as we did and the human relationship skills and discipline these homeless resisters demonstrated would not have taken place. (18) If we as trainers would have painted a picture of the council members as the symbol of evil we would have grounded them in sand rooted with hatred. Militant hatred would have led to fear and communication between the two groups may not have happened.

Our non-violent means led us toward a truthful ending. The correct means in struggling is as important as the end we were seeking. (19) The vehicle of

non violence was in search of the truth. The homeless resisters were looking for the God in the council members. They believed if the council members heard their stories they could help create a conversion in their lives. Their leader, Pastor Brice, believed that every person was a child of God and that following the spirit a divine covenant was possible with the city council members. By following the spirit we had created a crisis and established a communication link based on respect with the council members.

Pastor Brice and the homeless resisters felt a sense of empowerment in their struggle against that structure of evil. They felt empowered because as a homeless minority community they had confronted the city council members who represented the majority of Oakland citizens (20). This minority group of resisters was struggling against injustice as well as for justice, a justice rooted in a non-violent love that puts light on a dark situation (21). This dark situation allowed women and children to walk the streets of Oakland all night long looking for a room in the inn. This dark situation allowed the people in the sunny city of Oakland to look past the pain in the homeless persons' faces.

As a result of struggling against the system of injustice and not the council members we depersonalized our non-violent confrontation against the council members. If we were successful in depersonalizing our demands for the council members a divine covenant was possible. In other words, we were not seeking a victory over the council; we were seeking a victory over the structure of evil. The homeless resisters were saying to the council: 'we are citizens and children of God also.' Pastor Brice and the homeless non-violent resisters created the possibility of a spiritual conversion happening in the lives of the

council members. They sought to heal their differences with words of love and to make reconciliation their end. They hated the sins council members committed but showed love for the council members who were the sinners (22). The end of non-violent direction action is truth and reconciliation with the opposition.

#### EMPOWERMENT

Our fourth objective was one of empowerment for the non-violent homeless resisters. The moment Mission Safe community started questioning why they were homeless, and who' was responsible for their homelessness other than themselves they were empowering themselves. Their human suffering became their reason for questioning their condition. To be homeless is to know suffering from personal experience. To be homeless is to know suffering equal to God's servant Job. To be homeless is to walk with God. I never met a homeless person who did not believe in God. The non-violent direct action against the city council allowed the homeless resisters to carry their suffering to struggling. Suffering means to bear the cross; struggling says to the world I am trying. They moved from a suffering theology to a struggling theology. A theology that demanded that they confront the authorities of the City of Oakland; a theology that said to the council you see us as nobodies but we respect and love you because you are children of God. A theology based on non violence which has its foundation rooted in an agapeic love (23).

The vehicle of non violence gave the homeless resisters a sense of empowerment but it was the spirit of agapeic love that brought about a transformation in their daily lives. The homeless resisters took on a new sense of respect for themselves after taking over city hall. Standing up in



public and chanting "homeless but not helpless" gave this community faith in themselves. Non violent training and direct action liberated this community from a subservient, depressed, passive frame of reference to active empowered resisters. These homeless men, women and children no longer saw themselves as helpless and inferior rejects. As a result of confronting the representatives of the power structure their behavior changed and increased their self esteem (24). For example some resisters joined First Universe Baptist Church and other became active on committees within the Mission Safe community.

Non violent direct action gave the homeless resisters a renewed sense of self respect and plenty of energy to struggle. They took ownership of their struggle and Mission Safe helped to educate them about their exploited conditions. From struggling they learned that that the problems of the homeless were inherited by the capitalist system. In short the homeless resisters learned from confronting the city government that those who ran the city were more interested in giving tax breaks to corporations than housing homeless people. From struggling the strength of their own class was revealed to them. Non violent struggle made them see and feel their own power. Non violent struggle increased their scopes and sharpened their intellectual abilities (25). The proof of this rested on the fact that some of the homeless persons were able to get low paying jobs and many persons enrolled in school. The homeless resisters empowerment took place because they were following the spirit. The spirit not only gave them hope but by trusting and following the spirit the homeless non-violent resisters saw "God face to face". The suffering rejected masses are humble enough to see God "face to face! " As this suffering exploited class struggle to their feet and confront the oppressor, they are empowered. The

homeless resisters, because they were struggling non-violently, saw the spirit of God within them revealed! Therefore God was struggling with them and for them (26). God was—and is—all powerful. As a result of their non-violent struggle the homeless resisters realized the spirit within themselves. This new awareness of the spirit within them empowered the resisters. In short, empowerment took place in the resisters lives when they recognized the spirit of God within themselves. Non violent direct action struggle created the social and spiritual context so that the empowerment could take place in the non-violent homeless resisters lives.

The homeless resisters were transformed from an inactive group of people into a group of radical homeless revolutionaries through God's power and struggle. When the children of Mission Safe community gave flowers to each council member. It was an example of God's agapeic love. The children and flowers gave us insight into God's divine purpose for the human race. When the children gave the council members flowers they "poured out God's holy spirit" on each council person. The Mission Safe homeless community said to the council from this act we love you and recognize that the spirit of the God is in you. God's agapeic love was the power that brought the homeless non-violent resisters and the council to a position where reconciliation was possible (27). Non violent direct action resurrected the homeless resisters from the grave of self-pity to an empowered group of revolutionaries whose agapeic love created a holy conversion in the lives of the some of the council members on the homeless question.

As trainers we were interested in winning our demands of the city council. However, as non-violent trainers on a personal level we were most interested in helping empower the homeless non-violent resisters; helping them create a non-violent community. Our non-violent direct action struggle was a group process, but the homeless non-violent resisters self development in the non-violent process was also on a personal level (28). The resisters transformed into non-violent freedom fighters, should become interested in organizing other homeless persons into the homeless movement. Each homeless non-violent revolutionary has a divine duty to pull his or her brothers and sisters up on their feet and into struggle of resistance. The homeless non-violent resisters must come to realize that only by working to liberate their oppressed class will they be free. The homeless suffering masses are waiting for the empowered to hold their hands and guide them toward the transformation process that is rooted in an agapeic love. Their sleeping class must be shown by the homeless resisters living examples that the spirit of the God is a part of their lives (29). By taking part in non-violent direct action against a system that oppresses them, God is revealed. By struggling their homeless suffering class will develop a new self respect and find a power from within they did not realize they had (30).

#### THE MISSION SAFE NON VIOLENT COMMUNITY

Our fifth objective was to create a non-violent community at Mission Safe. The February sleep out of 1986 increased Mission Safe's homeless population from 50 to 250 people. As previously stated, there were only two bathrooms available to accommodate the men, women, and children. The very fact that 250 people lived in

One area forced this group of people to organize some kind of structure in which to live. These 250 people lived in a state of confusion until they embraced the philosophy of non violence. With teaching of no violence, the church's rules and regulations gave them a built-in discipline. The church allowed no drinking, cursing or fighting in their mission. For a period of time persons within the Mission Safe community would become highly upset if a person did something contrary to the philosophy of non violence. For example, I personally witnessed a homeless man with a drinking program stand up at their Monday night meeting and give information and names of persons drinking in the community.

It was the homeless people's participation in non-violent direct action struggle that made Mission Safe shelter into a non-violent community. As a result of confronting the Oakland City Council as a united front and committing civil disobedience in city hall intentional solidarity increased significantly in Mission Safe's community (31). Their participation in non-violent direct action gave them a sense of satisfaction that formed the non-violent resisters into an enthusiastic community of builders (32). No longer were they a helpless divided group of homeless people. Non violent direct action gave them the confidence to develop their own community (33). This community of non-violent resisters set up a democratic process which functions by consensus. For example, they started working committees which all of the homeless resisters had to participate in or leave the community. There was the Oversight committee, the Grievance committee, the Election committee, the Food committee, the Program committee, and the Executive committee. The homeless community became a community of faith. The power of non-violent direct action allowed these people to witness the spirit of God within themselves. The spirit of God liberated

this impotent class of people from oppression into a unified caring and faithful community.

Pastor Brice became too influential and powerful for the leaders in the city of Oakland. For example, after we demanded \$10 million dollars from the city for the homeless, gangsters and street hustlers offered him their personal protection which he did not need. The point is, they and others were moved by Pastor Brice's humble spirit. The police department reported to the council that the crime rate had gone down in East Oakland. Non-violent direct action protests historically have reduced crimes in a community after non-violent direct action took place (34).

The non-violent direct action process reduced the tension in the lives of the non-violent resisters. Their emotional health was better after taking part in the non-violent activity against the city council (35). Some homeless resisters stated that they felt less guilty about their homeless situation as a result of confronting the city and becoming active (36). The Monday night community meetings at the Mission Safe were examples of group empowerment. And transforming non-violent resistance had taught this community the meaning of cooperation (37). The Mission Safe community addressed questions relating to their social well being, the political meaning of homeless and the economical reasons for homelessness. The non-violent direct action activity created job and opportunities for some of the resisters. As a result some homeless resisters moved out of the Mission Safe community. We found that most Black single males refused to leave the community and had to be put out. We learned from these young men that they had no relationships in their lives other than the Mission community and were afraid of becoming isolated from their friends at the

Mission. The Mission Safe community not only empowered the resisters, the philosophy of non violence became a spiritual faith.

#### THE EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANT LESSONS

There are many lessons to be learned from this non-violent campaign for other non-violent direction action organizers. The first lesson is a historical one, that is, if you try to change a structure or a policy which is a part of an organized institution the representatives of that institution will resist making those changes. For example, the Oakland City Council members discredited Mission Safe and its leader Pastor Brice by calling for an audit of Mission Safe books. Their action forced us to spend time looking for an accountant who would audit the Mission's books for no fee. The point here is if you challenge those in power they will resist and retaliate when possible.

The second lesson we learned was that the media can be a part of the structure of evil. The Oakland Tribune reported its concern about the audit in its paper for two weeks. For example, the following statement in the Oakland Tribune is the beginning of a campaign by some city council members and the media to discredit Mission Safe. The council also asked the city auditor to examine Mission Safe's books and ordered that the shelter adhere to state guidelines on health and cleanliness."(38) These questions and doubts that Oakland's largest newspaper raised about the Mission and its leader, created problems within First Universe Baptist Church as well as an image problem for Pastor Brice in the community. We as non-violent trainers had met with Pastor Brice and his assistant on several occasions because the director of the American Friends Service Committee insisted on it. He had witnessed the city of Chicago discredit organizations when he worked

for AFSC in Chicago. Pastor Brice and his assistant assured us that their books were in order. What they mentioned was that no money had been missed. When Mission Safe books were approved by the audit that the city called for, the Oakland Tribune did not report those results in its paper. Instead the paper started printing articles which indicated that the Mission was not fit to house 250 people who lived there. The paper also raised questions concerning Pastor Brice's managerial skills.

The third lesson we learned was to be prepared to assist in other nonviolent struggles as opposed to preparing people to commit civil disobedience. For example, the next major problem we faced during this struggle was getting the services of a law firm to represent First Universe Baptist Church in a bankruptcy hearing. Before we created a crisis for the city council the bankruptcy court had given the church 45 days to pay what was owed to the bank or lose the building. As a result, we had to have some favorable action from the council within the 45 days. The council propositioned Pastor Brice and the non-violent resisters after we had been arrested on five different occasions at the council meetings and set up a tent city across from city hall. They told us they would consider helping Mission Safe get out of bankruptcy if we could find a law firm who specialized in bankruptcy to represent the church. We accepted their offer providing the council would send the court a letter requesting more time for the church to meet its bankruptcy obligation. We believed the council granted our request for several reasons. First of all, they were confronted with a crisis. Second, they felt we would not be able to find a law firm specializing in bankruptcy to represent the church, and thirdly, the federal Judge who was hearing the case had never extended time in a case such as the

Church. Fourthly, this writer threatened to move the homeless into the Hyatt hotel which the city had invested millions of dollars into and was important to Oakland's redevelopment plan. The Oakland Tribune reported for the council meeting that "Lorenzo Carlisle, an organizer of the protests, said he hoped that bringing the homeless to the hotel at 11<sup>th</sup> and Broadway would prompt the city council to save the shelter. We don't think it will be good business practice for Hyatt to have the homeless there, Carlisle said. # (39) AFSC became more involved in Mission Safe's problems when others were disassociating themselves from the church. AFSC called a special meeting to see what could be done to help the struggling Black church. A decision was made at this meeting to find a competent law firm to represent the Mission Safe. After one week of hard work AFSC found a law firm to represent the church free of charge.

The fourth lesson we learned was that this type of non-violent action could not have happened in most churches. The key question was: Could this type of non-violent direct action campaign take place in another black church? I believe that the only kind of church that could sustain a non-violent direct action campaign like the one we participated in would have to be an independent church. A church not free from the national hierarchy could not have taken part in radical activities as we engaged in during the Mission Safe campaign. For example, if First Universe Baptist Church had been a part of another denomination this campaign probably would never have happened. The local church may have needed permission from the church hierarchy. Secondly if the First Universe Baptist Church had been a part of national church structure and took part in non-violent action against the city for such a long period of time the church may have been ordered to end its protest against the city



council. The pastor probably would have been sent to a new church or placed on probation for insubordination to the national church. The pastor may have been disfellowshipped from the national church altogether.

The fifth lesson we learned that the Black preacher is all Powerful in his church. This non-violent direct action struggle would probably not have happened if the First Universe Baptist Church Deacon board had influenced Pastor Brice more than he influenced them. It is fair to say that Pastor Brice was the controlling factor in his church and as chairman of Mission Safe he controlled the board. When we non-violent activists started working with him and the homeless community the church did not question his decision to work with us. This controlling attitude and domineering personality is a part of most Black male preachers. In the Black church tradition, it is a sign of weakness for a pastor not to have control over the members of the church, particularly the deacon board. Pastor Brice is not considered a domineering preacher in comparison to most black preachers. However he ran his church without his members questioning most of his actions. I do not feel that a church or an organization which makes decisions by consensus would have reached a decision to create a crisis for Oakland City Council. There were too many questions to be answered before taking action. Only a Black church which was independent of a national body, and a church that trusted their pastor's judgment, could this happened.

The sixth lesson we learned from this non-violent struggle was that the local government and the federal government will not let a group of black people live together as a community in peace. As an activist who has been a part of movements and whose idea started from the center, and going all the way to the

left, I have never seen so many police agents infiltrate an organization like at Mission Safe. I stated the following words before the Oakland City Council on May 27, 1986, "In all my years as an activist in this city, I have never seen so many undercover policemen placed into a struggle."(40) The local power structure was content with homeless people living in the streets but felt threatened by the community at Mission Safe. In this writer's opinion Mission Safe was seen as a non-violent Christian communistic threat.

The seventh lesson we learned from this non-violent struggle was that support from other churches for a non-violent campaign is limited and not consistent. Only two pastors were arrested with Pastor Brice during this struggle. The major reason for this was fear. The pastors were afraid of the political leaders and had too much undeserving respect for them. However, it is only fair to point out that Mission Safe had hundreds of supporters and many churches were among them.

The Oakland City Council did not meet all of our demands. In fact, the county, state and the federal government (as well as, the Oakland City Council), had a responsibility toward the homeless people. As a result of our confronting the city council, the state and county gave Mission Safe funding for its homeless program without the Mission requesting it. The power of non-violent direct action enabled the church to increase the 45 days the court gave them to resolve the bankruptcy situation into a year and a half. The council members lobbied the state legislation for the ten million dollars we demanded. The county gave Mission Safe a contract worth \$400,000 a year.

The last lesson we learned from this struggle was to be careful in accepting money from a government agency. These government agencies started out giving the Mission funds with minimum restrictions. This writer is convinced that part of the reason these government agencies gave Mission Safe money was to make Mission Safe apart of the system. Once Mission Safe received some of its demands the Mission lost its will to struggle. As a result, before their contract had expired the agency was trying to take control of the Mission homeless protect. For example, the county insisted that Mission Safe hire a director who they recommended because he had managerial skills. However, when Pastor Brice, the chairman of the board of Mission Safe, terminated this person over the wishes of the county their funds were terminated. The Oakland Tribune reported that, "County and Oakland City officials also said they were disillusioned when Director Otis Toliver was fired after six months; he had brought the shelter its first Professional Management, they said." Rev. Brice felt that the director was not a grass roots person and more concerned with paper work than with the homeless community. (41)

## CONCLUSION

In March of 1989, the First Universe Baptist Church was sold for \$950,000 by the Bankruptcy Court. As a result, the church relocated to an area with greater social problems. I believe that God is reaffirming Rev, Brice's ministry and calling by placing him and the First Universe Baptist Church in this high-crime community.

As he and I stood in the center of his church, it seems to me that he was at peace with himself; his hair was greyer and and he was 20 pounds heavier than he was when I first met him. I was moved by the fact that he was not bitter with life, nor did he express hatred toward anyone. He was excited with their new challenge, and was in the process of planning a barbeque for the community. Rev. Brice stated to me, "Lo, God wants me here with His people. I must accept that."

Over the years, at times, he had resisted his ministry with the under-class, and at times, desired a middle-class church. I believe Pastor Brice will continue to think about running from the struggle of the suffering.

I had not planned to work on this issue for such a long time, but I had a duty and an obligation to the struggle, and to God, not to abandon this kind preacher. He shocked the Bay Area community and his colleagues of the gospel when he committed civil disobedience against nuclear weapons on Good Friday of 1986. I must admit that I am proud of Rev. Brice and I feel that he is an example of what the historical African-American church is about.

Almost from the start, I took the position that non-violent direct action could be used to empower people. I have shared with you a story where people intentionally used the non-violent philosophy of Dr. King to confront the forces of evil, and as a result, were empowered, This just happens to be one of the thousands of stories in God's world where non-violent direct action has brought about a transformation in the lives of oppressed people. Yes, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's philosophy of non-violent direct action can be used for social change.

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This book is dedicated to my son Mark Carlisle M.D. who embraced the non-violence teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at an early age, and always listened to the advice of his parents.



Mark D Carlisle MD. MBA, MPH, MA.