METTA CENTER
for NONVIOLENCE

"Understanding the Legacy of Dr. King": Audio Course Transcripts

> "Our moral obligations are not something that emerge from our sense of belonging to a group, a tribe or a race, or a nation; instead, it has to come out of a sense of obligation toward all of humanity, all living things, really.
>
> And once it does, then we can change the world."
>
> **DR. CLAYBORNE CARSON**

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1. What are the similarities and differences between King and Gandhi's leadership styles?

Dr. Carson: Well, first of all, the similarities. I think the similarities – they were both visionary leaders. They were both people who were less concerned about the immediate goals of their struggles. In the United States, civil rights, getting equal rights laws passed. You know, and in India, gaining national independence.

So, in a sense, they were both trying to – they were both involved in movements that were concerned about citizenship. Gaining rights that could be guaranteed by government.

But both of them saw beyond that. Both of them understood that gaining civil rights reform in the United States or gaining national independence in India was not going to really solve the problems that they saw as basic. Both of them were very concerned about those at the bottom of the social order.

And they were always reminding their followers of the need to think first of the peasants, think first of the poor. In King's case, the sanitation workers in Memphis. These are the people who you need to focus your attention on. And you know, in the case of King, when the civil rights legislation was passed, he didn't stop.

He, instead, turned his attention to Chicago and Memphis and poor people. In the case of Gandhi, when India gained its independence, he was not satisfied. He felt that they were leaving behind some of the basic objectives of the movement, that simply gaining independence from Britain did not materially change the lives of the hundreds of millions of peasants in India.

And so, I think that in both cases, these are people who, because they were visionaries, were never satisfied with the limited changes of movements around them. And that led to, sometimes, tension and conflict with the movement around them. I think one of the misconceptions that many people have is that in both Gandhi's case and King's case, you had a leader with a bunch of followers.

There were a lot of people in both of those movements who did not consider themselves followers of either Gandhi or King. And they had different notions. Some of them were visionaries themselves who had different visions of what the future would bring. But others were concerned about immediate things. Just getting reforms through that would make lives immediately better.

So, I think that when we look at both of them, part of what impresses me was their skill at sometimes moderating between the contending forces and their movement. Sometimes with great difficulty trying to bring together the extremes of their movements.

And I think part of their greatness was that they were able to become the preeminent spokesperson of very diverse and complex movements.

2. How did King deal with people who were not committed to nonviolence?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: With great difficulty. Like other great leaders. Like Gandhi. Like Nelson Mandela. I mean, both of them had the privilege of being part of mass movements that were – and the reason why they were 'mass' is because they did attract lots of different types of people who brought different perspectives. That's what made the movements powerful.

King or Gandhi or Mandela could not have achieved what they wanted simply by people who were following them. They achieved their goal because of many people who maybe admired them but didn't necessarily follow their tactics or strategies.

And that's – that was inevitable. I think King – one of the essays I did about King, actually, it's in the congressional record because it was part of my testimony for the King holiday. And I called him a moderating force within the movement.

It's a role that most people don't recognize that he played, because of this misconception, this mythology, that the movement was King and his followers. But once you get beyond that mythology, then you see that one of his great skills is that he was one of the few people who could be admired and listened to by people as diverse as Stokely Carmichael on the one side, or the NAACP on the other side, you know, the more conservative forces in the movement and the more militant forces in the movement. They could all relate to Martin Luther King and he could relate to them. When he's challenged by young people promoting the notion of Black Power, he has a long dialog with Stokely Carmichael on the Mississippi Voting Rights March.

And that's kind of the conversation he never had with Malcolm X. And he has it with Stokely Carmichael. And you see him, how patient he is in terms of trying to engage in this dialog with someone who respects him but doesn't agree with him. And, you know, of course, Gandhi had to deal with people like Nehru who, again, respected him, but didn't always agree with him. Or Menon or, you know, some of the other people in the Indian Movement who very strongly disagreed with him.

He understood that that was part of his role as a leader: trying to persuade people to come to his view, and persuade people who are not the type who would simply say, "Well, you know, you're Martin Luther King and I'm going to defer to your judgment on this." That's not the way the movement works. That's not the way any movement – mass movement works. And only in retrospect, only in the mythological understandings of the movement do we have that view.

And that's important to keep in mind because many times I've heard people say, "If only we had another Martin Luther King. If only we had this great leader, then we would have a great movement." And I think that puts it backwards. I think the great movement creates the great leader.

It’s the Rosa Parks. It’s the four students in Greensboro. It’s the freedom riders. It’s the voting rights leaders in the deep south. It’s those people who create the great movement. They're not waiting for instruction. Rosa Parks wasn’t sitting on the bus with a cell phone waiting for a call from Martin Luther King.

She did what she had to do. And I think not many of us can be Martin Luther King. But I think all of us could imagine ourselves being the Rosa Parks or the four students or the, you know, a freedom rider. Or, you know, just many people who play small roles. And maybe in the process of playing a small role might find that they have qualities of leadership that they didn’t know they had. And I can see that with Martin Luther King. That he gained confidence in his leadership and he gained abilities that he did not even imagine he had at that point.

I think it’s much more accurate to view him as almost a reluctant leader. One of the volumes of the King Papers is called, “Call to Leadership.” He responded to the call. That, you know, in many of our lives, we have this moment where someone says, you know, here’s this movement. We need you.

And we can either say, “Well, you know, I’ve got a final the next day or I’ve got these other responsibilities. And I just don’t have the time.” Or whatever. Or we can say, “I’m not sure if I can be of great use to you, but I’m willing to do what I can.”

And out of that second group come great leaders.

3. Who was King outside of professional life?

How did King's private life affect his work and leadership? Who was King the Man? What was his family life like?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: Well, to understand King the man, I think you have to understand his family background. He was deeply rooted in the Black Baptist tradition. His grandfather had been a Baptist preacher. Reverend Williams had been one of the people who had left rural Georgia to come to Atlanta in the late 19th century and had built Ebenezer Church from a small congregation to a significant institution in the Black community in Atlanta.

And then his father, Michael King, who becomes Martin Luther King Sr., again, arrives from rural Georgia, comes to the city, trying to provide leadership as well, religious as well as political leadership for the Black community in Atlanta. He was very much a civil rights leader as well as a minister. Both Reverend Williams and King Senior, who becomes known as Daddy King, were I guess what I would call social gospel ministers in the sense that they saw the connection between the prophetic tradition in the Bible, and what was necessary for African Americans to gain advancement in American society.

So, these provided role models for young Martin Luther King of leadership that was both spiritual and political. Of seeing the message, the key message of the Bible being one of social justice, that the sermon on the mount is a plea for a more just society. So, they saw no conflict between talking about political issues, contemporary issues, as well as spiritual issues. And not seeing the goal of spiritual life simply as an afterlife, but seeing that that had an impact on how you lived your life on earth.

So, I think that's key to understanding who King was. He was always primarily a minister. A person who provided spiritual guidance. And it happened that spiritual guidance was also visionary, about what kind of a society as well as what he wanted to do as an individual. What kind of a society was consistent with Christian principles.

4. What was King like as a father and husband?

Could you talk a little bit more about King's relationship with Coretta Scott King as well as his role as a father?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think from the beginning of his leadership – actually, from his beginning of his relationship with Coretta Scott – he understood that she was a very unique partner in that….he was obviously in love for the typical reasons. That she was attractive. She was someone who he felt he was compatible with.

But he also felt that their politics were compatible. That they both wanted to bring change to the South. They both had a broad vision of social justice which extended beyond civil rights. Both of them felt that it was necessary to bring economic justice to the country. They talked about socialism and other kinds of radical ideas when they were dating, and you can see that in the letters they wrote to each other.

So, when the Montgomery Bus Boycott started, she was a supportive partner from the beginning. I think looking back, you can see that Martin Luther King was somewhat sexist in his attitudes about her role, and I think there was some tension over that. I think she would have probably preferred to be more active. But once they started their family, then she was the one who stayed at home while he was the one who played a more upfront role in the movement. At least until the early 60s when she took the lead on speaking out against the Vietnam War. She was involved in the Women's International Strike for Peace.

And at that time, Martin Luther King did not want to speak out on the war because he felt that that would harm his position as a civil rights leader. So, she often spoke. Also, he might have expressed in public long before 1967, when King took the public stand in his speech at the Riverside Church in New York. Now, with respect to the family, as the children got to the point where they could travel with their parents – for example, in the Chicago campaign in 1966, Coretta insisted that the family come with him when he moved into a ghetto in Chicago. You know, the kids were with them.

And from – actually, from the point, from the summit of the Montgomery March on, you often see pictures of Martin and Coretta marching together at the head of protest campaigns. And this continues until the end of his life. And indeed, when he goes to Memphis, and he's assassinated during the sanitation worker's strike, it is Coretta who insists that she and the kids come to Memphis after his assassination and make sure that the march takes place there.

So, you know, later on when I got to know her, I think it was quite clear that in some ways, after his death, she came into her own as a leader. She no longer had to play a subordinate role. By that time, the kids were old enough so that she could take a major role in disseminating a lot of

ideas about civil rights, feminism, her anti-war stance. Later on, she became a proponent of gay rights and many other issues. In fact, there would be no Martin Luther King holiday except for the role of Coretta Scott King promoting the idea of a King holiday.

5. How did King define nonviolence?

How did King define Nonviolence? What, according to him, were its key principles?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think first of all, King and most other advocates of Gandhian nonviolence define it as resistance. That it's, in a way, I think both King and Gandhi were uneasy with the term nonviolence because it says what it's not rather than what it is.

And I think for both of them, there should be a more active term. And I think that King would always talk about it first of all, as resistance. Strong resistance. Resistance that has a lot of spiritual and sometimes physical power behind it because it's the power of bringing large numbers of people into a struggle as opposed to a violent struggle, which is almost inherently a small group of people.

And so, I think that he would define it as resistance that tries to achieve a goal that does not involve the destruction of the other side. That it involves trying to, you know, as he put it during the Birmingham campaign, or I think even as early as the Montgomery campaign, it's not to defeat white people or white authority. It's to empower justice and to bring justice into the relationship between those in authority, and those who are subordinate.

So, I think the question for King is how do you do this? And he and the people in his organizations developed a set of ideas and tactics and strategies that made sense in terms of trying to bring about a result that was sustainable. I mean one of the goals of any movement is not only what you win, but how do you keep what you won?

And nonviolence does that because it helps change the ideas of those on the other side. And once those ideas have changed, then you don't always have to use violence to keep whatever goals you've achieved.

I think finally, I think for King it was a spiritual concept that had to do with his notion of religion, that religion was not just an institution, the church. It was a spiritual idea that there's a moral force in the universe. And as he put it, that bends towards justice. And that a movement that is in concert with that moral force can achieve a great deal. So, I think that for him, it was a much more complex idea than simply the notion that – simply a refusal to use violence. It's a willingness, a desire to use other tactics and strategies that are, in the end, more effective.

6. Was King's approach to nonviolence unique?

So, you mentioned Gandhian nonviolence and people also talk about Kingian nonviolence.

Is there a particular flavor of King's approach to nonviolence that could be differentiated from Gandhi or other nonviolence leaders?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: Now you're getting into something that I find – you know, when you look at Gandhi, he was very uneasy with the notion of Gandhianism. That complex ideas can just be reduced to a set of, you know, a number of principles and if you get people to say they believe in those principles, then you've accomplished the goal.

I think that King first of all understood that whatever his ideas about nonviolence, he was only one force in a much larger movement, where a lot of the initiative came from below rather than above. He couldn't simply just say, "Well, you know, I thought this issue through and I think that all the people in this movement should use this strategy and these tactics."

He could say that, but he would know that's not the way the movement worked. The four students in Greensboro, they didn't do what they did because they heard a speech by Martin Luther King and decided to act. They didn't really listen to or consult with any adult. They developed a tactic. They didn't even know the name of the tactic. And I think it was originally called a sit-down because they sat down at a lunch counter. And only later was it called a sit-in.

So, these 18-year-old first year students in college really launched a new phase of the movement. And similarly with the Freedom rides. You had other people who were – went through – had their own understanding of nonviolence. You had other leaders in the movement. James Lawson, who probably had a deeper understanding initially than King did of nonviolence. He had lived in India. And certainly understand Gandhian nonviolence better.

And I think King himself, if you look at it, he developed most of his ideas through practice. And he states this explicitly a number of times, that in the course of the Montgomery movement, he learned certain things about nonviolence that he didn't know before. And similarly, during the Birmingham campaign. I think it's really only in Birmingham that he begins to formulate these in terms, you know, the Letter from Birmingham Jail is probably the best formulation that he ever wrote about the justification for civil disobedience.

So, I think that King understood that this was something complex, something that evolved over time, something that he, as Martin Luther King, didn't have complete control over. There were other voices in that discussion. Other people who had their own notions.

And what that meant is that in crucial instances like in Birmingham, he was undecided what to do. He didn't have – when it actually came down to that crucial point of do I go to jail, or do I not go to jail? There was nothing in his ideas about nonviolence that could answer that question.

That had to be decided by the issue of what was – what did he think would work in a situation that he had never been in before?

And I think my own view is that that's typically what happens in most nonviolent movements. Some of it is obviously influenced by people who have studied this tradition, going back to Thoreau and Tolstoy and people like that. But others are simply ordinary people trying to make their lives and the lives of those around them more just, trying to gain a measure of dignity, and who innovate.

And that innovation comes from the bottom up. And I think that's why there's hundreds of nonviolent tactics that have been developed in movements around the world. All of them, effective to some degree. And each movement makes its own contribution to the tradition of nonviolent resistance.

7. Letter from a Birmingham Jail

In A Letter from a Birmingham Jail King wrote, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Can you comment on King’s vision of an interconnected world? As well as what movements today can learn from this vision?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think the quote points to one of the basic foundations of King’s ideals. I think that when we look at what has happened over the last few hundred years in terms of the invention of the modern notion of universal human rights.

It really starts with an increasing sense of empathy that people began to feel as they moved away from their limited surroundings, their you know, what King would call kind of their connection with their community, their tribe, their race, and began to recognize that there were other people in the world that they should care about.

I mean we can trace that back to, in the Judaic Christian tradition, the Good Samaritan story, which is essentially a story about how we need to move beyond the notion that we only have a moral obligation to people of our own tribe.

The Good Samaritan is a person from another tribe who helps the person in need along the highway. And the point of the story, when Jesus tells it, is that people of his own tribe walk by. They didn’t have that sense, even for someone in their own group, that they needed to stop and help. But someone from another group was able to see that.

And he’s using that as a way of saying that that happens in – that says that our moral obligations are not something that emerge from our sense of belonging to a group, a tribe or a race, or a nation; instead, it has to come out of a sense of obligation toward all of humanity, all living things, really. And once it does, then we can change the world. And he’s saying in a sense that that is in our long-term self interest. Because the world is becoming more interconnected.

And we can see how that has played such a role in the development of human rights. I mean you can’t even have a concept of universal human rights unless you are essentially saying that there’s a person on another continent that I might not even know, of a different race, different religion, whatever. And yet, I have a sense that that person’s destiny affects me. Now, we talk about globalization. But we rarely – we talk about it mainly in economic terms. You know, the economies of the world being interconnected.

We are still in the early stage of trying to understand that in moral empathetic terms, that we are interconnected. That we have a relationship with other people, wherever they are in the world.

8. What was the relationship between Malcolm X and MLK?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: Well, at first, there wasn't very much of a relationship. They were in kind of different worlds. Martin Luther King was in the South; he was involved in a major freedom struggle that occupied all of his time. Malcolm X was in the North; he was involved in a mostly religious movement. In fact, almost entirely religious movement because under Elijah Mohammed, he did not allow members of the Nation of Islam to get involved in politics, discouraged them from even voting. At the time of the March on Washington, he forbade any member of the Nation of Islam from going to the march.

So, they were in these kinds of separate worlds. One of them just a limited kind of insular, some would say even cult-like group, the Nation of Islam, which really wanted separation from the rest of the society. And King, who was an activist minister, wanting to engage with the society, to bring about civil rights change.

Now, this begins to change in 1963 and '64 as Malcolm X becomes more dissatisfied with the constraints placed on him by Elijah Mohammed, and wants to have a role in this unfolding movement that is reaching the Black masses. He is actually at the March on Washington. He doesn't participate, but he observes from the sidelines, and he writes to King. He wrote a number of letters to King, trying to get King to come to his political forums.

Right before the March on Washington, he writes a long letter to King. And King never responds, which of course, upsets Malcolm X a great deal. But he's determined after 1963, especially after Birmingham and the March on Washington, to have some role in this new and increasingly militant movement. He finally gets to encounter King for the first time in 1964. He kind of unexpectedly encounters him after King has testified at a congressional hearing and walks out the door.

And there's Malcolm X and walks up and he grins. And they shake hands and that's that famous photograph. They don't really say very much at that point. But after that, there's an effort to try to get them together to see if they can talk through some of their differences. I've talked to Clarence Jones who was very close to King and also knew Malcolm X. And, you know, a number of people were trying to set up a meeting between the two of them. Malcolm X himself was trying to have some relationship with the movement. He invites Fanny Lou Heimer to come to New York and speak at his Audubon Ballroom to his followers. And he tells his followers, "I want you to get more politically involved."

This leads to a lot of conflict with Elijah Mohammed. And eventually, Malcolm X is suspended because of his public comments after Kennedy – President Kennedy is assassinated. But after he's essentially expelled from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X has meetings, as I said, with people in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He even goes to Atlanta and tries to meet with King. He writes him letters.

But it just doesn’t ever happen. He even goes to Selma during the voting rights campaign. But King, as it happens, is in jail at the time. So, Malcolm X is only able to meet with Coretta Scott King. And he tells her that, “You know, I’m not here to make life more difficult for Martin Luther King. I’m trying to make it easier for him because if they see me as the alternative – white people see me as the alternative, maybe they'll listen to Dr. King more.”

So, I think we can only speculate, you know, what would have happened because right within weeks of him going to Selma, he’s assassinated. And this meeting never takes place.

But I think both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King respected each other. King felt that what Malcolm was doing was counterproductive. But he also felt that Malcolm might have a great future if he gave up his, not so much violent activity, but just violent rhetoric. And I think that was part of King’s criticism of Malcolm, is that he talked in a militant way, but he really wasn’t militant in the sense of standing up to the kinds of segregationist power that King had to stand up to every day.

9. How did King get his start in nonviolence?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: Even as a young man, as a teenager, Martin Luther King had been exposed to Gandhian ideas. He had studied at Morehouse College with Benjamin Mays, who was the president and he had been one of the – a number of African Americans who had been to India and had met with Gandhi or other members of the Gandhian movement. And so, he was aware of these ideas. Certainly, when he was there 15, 16, 17 years old.

When he went off to Crozer Theological Seminary, he heard a lecture by Mordecai Johnson, another of the African American leaders who had been to India and had met with Gandhi. And he gave a lecture. First, I think Martin Luther King was skeptical. He did not understand how Gandhian ideas were sufficient to deal with an evil like the Nazis during WWII.

But he did have a great interest in the lecture and went out and bought books about Gandhi that informed him more. I think another source of influence was the writings of Howard Thurman. Howard Thurman had met with Gandhi in 1935 or ‘36, I think, and had had a long conversation about nonviolence and about maybe applying the nonviolent ideas. Gandhi had encouraged that in terms of whether they – these ideas might be applicable to solving the race problem in the United States.

So, all of this was part of King’s background before the Montgomery Bus Boycott. But when the boycott started, he was not initially a proponent of anything like Gandhian resistance. He believed in nonviolence. But it was partially because of his Christian background and partially because it was a necessity for a movement like the boycott movement. It was nonviolent.

But transforming a nonviolent movement into his nonviolent ideas took time. And I think a crucial person in this respect was Bayard Rustin who arrived in Montgomery in February of 1956 and had a long background himself in terms of learning about and understanding and practicing Gandhian nonviolence going back to the 1930s. He had been involved with the March on Washington movement during WWII, the movement to desegregate the military.

He was certainly a veteran of nonviolent struggles. And moreover, he had met Coretta Scott King. She had been a high school student when she first heard him. And she was, herself, an activist, a nonviolent activist, much more than King was when they met. So, when she told Martin that having guns around the house – Martin still, at that point, went out and got a gun permit early in the boycott to [* 00:03:49.7] for – so that his bodyguard would be able to protect him and his family. – and when she said that having a gun around the house didn’t make her feel more secure, I think that led Martin Luther King to be more open to the idea of nonviolence. Not just as a tactic, but as a principle.

And I guess, finally, during the course of the boycott, Glenn Smiley was also a very important influence during – Bayard Rustin had to leave because of the controversy about his presence as an outside agitator. Glenn Smiley was able to be more low profile during the boycott, and was

able to connect King to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which provided help in terms of disseminating Gandhian ideas, including later on publishing a comic book about the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

So, by the end of the boycott, I think he had come to the point where he accepted Gandhian resistance as a principle, as opposed to simply nonviolence as a tactic.

10. What do you most want people to know about Dr. King?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think I would like to – I would like people to know most about him is that Martin Luther King was a dedicated, visionary, prophetic leader. Someone whose concerns extended beyond the United States, to the globe, extended beyond, you know, a limited period of time, you know, that period which people call the Civil Rights Movement, as if it has a beginning and an end.

His concerns were always historical, going back into the past. He was always talking about the connection between the anti-slavery movement and the movement for civil rights in the 1950s and ‘60s. And the connection between that movement and the movements going on around the world, the colonial – anti-colonial movements, the anti-apartheid movement.

So, I think that his uniqueness was that here was a person who was an important figure in a particular movement at a particular time, but his significance transcends that. Because he was able to see these connections that many of us miss between what’s going on here and around us and around the things that we're concerned about and the aspirations of people in other parts of the world.

I think that that – we always need visionary leaders like Martin Luther King to bring that to our attention and force us to think about that.

11. Who was the "Radical" King?

When people use the term "Radical King," what do they mean?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think sometimes, that description of him is based on a misunderstanding. Like, I've heard people talk about King became more radical as he became older. And I think that's just wrong. That's just from people who have not really studied him very much. From his first writings as a teenager, from the first time he describes his mission as a minister, he's talking about bringing about change in slums, and unemployment, economic security.

You know, he's talking about the social gospel. The same social gospel that Walter Rauschenbusch was talking about, you know, many years, many decades before the one that led to many people to join the socialist party at the turn of the century. This kind of notion that Christianity demands justice in all areas. And that that was his motivating force.

So, if you go back and look at those papers, you know, that he writes as a seminary student in 1948 when he talks about slums, unemployment, economic insecurity, what is he doing 20 years later in Chicago and Memphis at the poor people's campaign. That was always his concern. I think that Rosa Parks turned him into a civil rights leader. If she hadn't been there in 1955 and he hadn't been in Montgomery in 1955, he probably would have always stayed a social gospel minister, becoming involved in, you know, helping poor people like some ministers do today, but he would not have become a civil rights leader. We probably wouldn't be talking about him today.

So, Rosa Parks made him into a civil rights leader, and I think for ten years he did that pretty well. I think anyone would say, you know, for someone who didn't ask for the job, someone who was somewhat reluctant to take on that role, he spent the next ten years and succeeded admirably. But once he had succeeded as a civil rights leader by 1965, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, he went back to his radical roots. He moves to Chicago, sets up shop in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago, and begins to deal with the same issues that he was concerned about as a teenage seminary student.

So, I think that King's basic orientation was one of transforming the society as a whole into something more just. And that meant not just civil rights reform, but a radical transformation of all the institutions in this society – the political, the economic. He was a critic of capitalism. Which didn't make him a communist, it just made him part of a long-standing tradition in America in which many people have been critical of the capitalist system and are searching for some alternative to a kind of capitalism that is very hurtful for those at the bottom of the social order.

So, I think that those kinds of things make him a radical in the sense of going to the root of the problem. Of trying to not deal with, you know, not just making life better for individual poor people, but changing the structure that produces poor people. And that was his goal.

12. What would King be working on if he were alive today?

What do you think King would be doing if he were alive today? What issues would most engage his attention and what would be his strategies or advice on facing today's global challenges?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think King would be doing today what he really started out doing 60 years ago or so, when he was still a young minister. That is, he would be dealing with the broadest range of issues. The economic issues, especially. I think he was always concerned about the question of economic justice, economic transformation of the society, trying to find ways of dealing with the kind of society that produces slums and unemployment and all the things that he talked about as a seminary student.

So, he would certainly be concerned about that. Also, he would be concerned about the issue of war. He understood when he was criticizing the Vietnam War, that there would be other wars like that. So, I have no doubt that he would be in the lead in terms of criticizing this way of solving international problems through warfare. And I think in the broadest sense, he would also – he would also be always concerned about those who were most needy. I could easily see him being very much involved in the issue of immigration.

Because for him, our loyalties should be ecumenical and global, rather than narrow. You know, the notion that only American citizens should have human rights protected would be obviously something he couldn't accept.

And so, for him, we would be moving toward a society in which all people, everywhere in the world, would be able to have life, liberty, and the ability to pursue happiness. And we have to find some way of making that possible for those who are poor as well as those who are wealthy. I mean when you take an issue like immigration, you can see that people who are middle-class and upper-middle class, they can live everywhere in the world. They can work wherever they want. The United States welcomes people who are skilled professionals coming and give special visas for them.

It's only when you're poor that you find that when you cross a national border you lose all your rights. And I think he would understand that that's a crucial issue. And I think all of us should understand that because all of us, when we think about it, what rights do we have as a human being? What are our inalienable human rights? We only find that out when we go to another country or maybe even in this country, find out that the rights that we thought we had, we really don't have. So, I think we're almost at the starting point in terms of establishing a notion that we have rights that go with us wherever we set foot on the earth, and that we have a right to move where we want on this earth.

You know, that's something that it's going to take another 100 years or 200 years to accomplish that. But I think King and Gandhi too, would understand that that's what we're really about. You know, when do we get to that phase of universal human rights?

13. What was King's leadership style?

What kind of leader was King? What were the characteristics of King's leadership style?

Dr. Clayborne Carson: I think King's leadership style was shaped by his role as a minister, as a preacher. It was very much a visionary leadership. He saw his role as looking out into the future and saying, "Here's the goal that we as a people need to be striving for." And while other people were more concerned about the immediate issues.

A good example of this would be the speech he gave at the March on Washington. For many of us who were there, the goal was to get Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill through congress. But when he gets up to speak, he doesn't mention the Civil Rights Bill. Instead, he gets into a dialog with Thomas Jefferson about the meaning of the Declaration of Independence.

He begins the talk by talking about the idea of universal human rights stated in the Declaration of Independence. All men are created equal. And says, "We still haven't lived up to that ideal. And now is the time to begin to do that. And that's the reason for the march."

Well, when you think about it, that's a much broader goal than simply getting a Civil Rights Bill passed. Getting the Civil Rights Bill does not make people – it doesn't bring about human rights on a universal scale. You know, the Declaration of Independence doesn't say, "All U.S. citizens have inalienable rights." So, I think that's one of the reasons why the speech endures, is that it talks about issues that are still with us. About when will we, as a nation, live up to those ideals?

And when will we ever get to the point where people throughout the world have equal rights?