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***Paths to Peace:
Educating and Practicing Nonviolence***

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I appreciate the invitation to be here and I am really humbled by the privilege of being able to share with you just a brief moment. I'm just a poor old country boy trying to figure out what's happening in the world. My remarks are going to be brief because I can't wait to get into the question and answer period. So what I'll do is quickly share with you some of my experiences, then we'll draw out and elaborate on some of the things that might interest you. I'll also talk about some of the things we've done today. I always say "we" because there are so many people who are involved, who share in this experience.

When students are sent to my office to have an appointment with me and others, like today, when I told a young graduate student who just arrived on campus, "I thought you said this person was your friend? He sent you to meet with *me*? I usually capture and kidnap people and get them involved in so many projects and so much work. Did you know this before you walked into my office?" He said he didn't know. So, I sent this grad student out with three research projects. He just came by to visit for a half hour. I just finished meeting with my students, teaching class, and it's an honors course (it's an honor for me to be there with them), but they're required to write a fifty page paper for my class in preparation for later work. I'm going to tap their interest; that's why I have fifty pages for them to write about. If they can endure fifty pages, it might stimulate commitment on something. I think after 50 pages they'll either figure it out or drop out.

Let me say first of all that I come from a humble background and I grew up around a lot of women. Older women were my teachers. In fact, my English teacher was also my Sunday school teacher. So I actually went to school six days a week. So I had lots of going to school. Not too sure about

education, but I had lots of going to school. And my grandmother, who was a third grade graduate, was the one who owned her own home, which was like a huge apartment building back in the 1930's. She opened up a grocery store after she bought an orange grove and cut down the trees. People laughed at her. The orange grove was dormant. She sold the wood and cut up the lots. Sold individual lots for people to own and build their own homes. That's why she built the grocery store. She knew that people need a home and people needed something to eat. She finished the third grade; I wonder what would have happened if she had gone to college. So I have to say, anything that I have learned, that I can share with you, comes from those roots of being able to not only imagine things, but to make them happen. That's what I believe in: Make it happen.

So, growing up in a segregated community, society and going to school, a segregated school, I learned to appreciate differences because I lived in a Latin-American community in Tampa, Florida—Ybor City. One part of my family is West Indian, another part is Cuban, another part is French (LaFayette), and the predominant part is African. Which means we are all Africans, we come from the greatest civilization—Africa. But it's good to be here. We may have come on different ships, but now we're in the same boat.

So the question is how do we make a world that we can enjoy and others might also appreciate in the future? That's what we're about.

The path that leads to peace is a peaceful path. That is to say, we cannot achieve a goal unless that goal is represented in the means. The only assurance we have that peace is possible is to find a peaceful way to arrive at peace. This is what we learned at our nonviolence training when we were in Nashville in college preparing for the sit-in Movement, and I think the success of the Movement in Nashville had a lot to do with the training we received. In fact, once we started our sit-in Movement

in Nashville to desegregate lunch counters, it lasted three months and the lunch counters were desegregated. That was because we were prepared and trained. We took this non-violence in a scientific way for experimentation.

And I must confess to you right away, so we can get past this and down to the other source: I used to be a gang leader. I became a leader because I believed in striking first. So when I got into a fight, I would not put up my dukes and dance around. In fact, I didn't put up my dukes. I'd look one way and then strike the other way. I never looked at my target because you telegraph—people can tell what you're going to do. That's what boxers learn to do. If you watch the eyes of your opponent, you can tell what they're going to do next. That's why they keep looking at the quarterback—to see which way his head is turned. The clever quarterback looks one way then throws the other. So the smart blockers in defense always look the opposite way. In other words if the quarterback looks right, that means he's going to throw left. So what you do is look left.

So the strategy started at an early age of turning the other cheek. That while people might show you their worst side, the way you defeat that is to turn the other cheek and show them your best. So in the concept of non-violence, what you're trying to do is reject the hate that you're experiencing. You want to reject the inner feelings people are trying to impugn upon you. You want to totally deny their efforts to get you to be like them.

I have to defend myself . . . that's not enough. You don't defend yourself. Destroy your enemy.

Guess what? The enemy is not a person. The enemy is an idea. Because people have the potential for the greatest good as well as the greatest evil. Within each individual, there is the greatest potential for peace. The goal of non-violence is to bring out the best in others and bring them out of their

environment. As I've stressed, we're all caught up in this system of violence and environment. But you know what? We can extricate ourselves from that. We can abandon violence.

Martin Luther King said, "Violence is bankrupt." It means that purpose becomes convoluted. The very person who perpetrates the violence becomes the victim of violence. It's like drinking poison and expecting your opponent to die, because violence is self destructive. Once people realize they don't really have to participate in the violence, then they come to the conclusion that they can withdraw their participation. That's what we did in the Movement.

The Montgomery bus boycott was a good example. Many of you know about that: Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King were elevated to a higher level. What we talk about here is the fact that people realize that they themselves were participating in their own victimization by paying their money, riding on the back of the bus, and complaining about segregation. If you go along with a system that's unjust, a system that's immoral—then what does it do to you? How can you define yourself in that situation if you are a participant? The hard thing that people did in Montgomery, Alabama with the bus boycott is to refuse to continue to cooperate with an evil system. They were not trying to put the bus company out of business and try and punish people. They came to the realization themselves that they had the power to change themselves.

Once people change themselves, the system collapses. The violence we experience today is because of our own participation and our own silence (which is just another form of participation). Apathy is self-inflicted violence. Some people will tell you, "Don't say anything!"; "Don't rock the boat!".

When you see one of your fellow workers abused and mistreated and you are silent, you are a

participant. What we have to recognize is that we have an obligation if we are going to be our very best, we must make sure others are also treated as equal human beings.

So it's not about changing the world alone, it's about changing ourselves. That's what happened to me as a young gang member. Now the truth of the matter is, and I confess, the reason I got into the sit-in Movement and the Civil Rights stuff, the non-violent Movement, was for two reasons. I was concerned about getting justice and breaking down the barriers of segregation and having equal opportunities, but the real, real, real reason I got involved with this non-violence was not about turning the other cheek and letting someone hit you on one side and then turning the other again. [I've been turning my cheeks all the time. My grandmother used to turn my cheeks and you didn't hit back—that didn't cross your mind.] That wasn't the problem; I could take a lick. The real thing I wanted to do was to see how I could feel on the inside if someone was going to do something to harm me. Could I actually love somebody who was trying to hurt me, harm me? I had to search myself to see if I could dig into my own heart to find if there was any ounce of love or compassion for that person. Of course, during the Movement I had plenty of chances to practice that. I've been in jail 27 times and beaten up two or three times, and once left for dead. I've had plenty of time to find out how I'd feel. And you know what, it's remarkable. I became absolutely convinced about non-violence because of what it did for me. The potential and the power that changed me, my attitude. I can't explain to you what a transformation it was.

Well, what we've done is this: I'm on the road to establishing institutions where non-violence can be practiced, where we can do research and begin to see how non-violence can be applied in every area of human relations. One of the things we did in Colombia, Latin America, is that we have transformed an entire prison (one of the most notorious prisons—Bella Vista located in the high

hills). Prisoners invited us in to do non-violence training with them because they were losing their friends, because about six inmates a day on average were being killed inside — mostly by gangs. You know, these groups very clever, because if they really wanted to hurt you, they wouldn't get you but they would kill your best friend. When you start losing your best friends, that really makes a leader feel powerless and lonely. [After all, the most important thing we have in life is companionship and each other. All the other things, material things, are nothing, really. After all, you don't go around driving a luxury car all by yourself, do you? You find yourself watching television and you start talking to yourself. You better get somebody else to talk to, too. The computer can't answer you back —not really. And young folks, don't fall in love with your computer. It won't give you a ring.] So these inmates decided they wanted to have some non-violence training to save their partners in crime. So they sent for me. They had gotten the literature, because you can get anything you want in prison in Colombia.

So I said, "Ok. We'll go talk to them." They wanted us to train them—they' didn't have any money. So we said, "Ok. We'll do it for free." But we also said, "If we train you, we're going to train you to be trainers. Your job is to train the rest of the inmates in non-violence, because we can't train all 4,000. We'll take the leaders and we'll train you to do that." They agreed. The only day we had available is Saturday and that's visitation day—conjugal visits. I said, "You figure it out. You're smart enough, figure it out." They decided they would start on Saturday—every other, and rotate.

If you can take a prison that is notorious for its residents and transform it so it can be renamed as the first non violent prison in Latin America, then something truly has happened. You know what they're doing today? They're bringing children in from the schools to the prison to be trained by inmates in non-violence. [After all, I was looking for a faculty I didn't have to pay, one that already

had “tenure.” Life sentence tenure.] I didn’t have to worry about where they were going to be, if they were going to make it on time. They’re right there; they live and work in the same place.

We also trained militants in the Nigerian Delta Region, militants who kidnapped and brutalized people. Yes. My wife, who is with me tonight [Kate LaFayette], was with me when we were training these militants in non-violence just a few months ago in June. One man got up and told us he had killed 180 people by himself. That was his count (and he had wounded others as well). These are the kind of people we’re talking about. So we’re talking about a non-violence is taking that force of violence and transforming that force into a powerful peaceful non-violence force. It’s called “Moral Aikido” —where you don’t injure your opponent and redirect your opponent’s energy. This allows the opponent to attempt to harm you yet makes sure the opponent does not harm himself.

We are talking about something that is revolutionary and how we can change. We do not have to live in this world of violence. Today we can transform our society because violence does not have to be a way of life for people. We don’t have to be caught up in this web. If we’re smart enough to figure out how to get in outer space and walk on the moon, we’re going to figure how to conquer “inner space” and walk on earth in peace. We’re smart enough. It’s a matter of redirecting our resources and redirecting our energies.

As I close, so we can have a few questions and answers, suppose we had in every university a program where students could take non-violence courses. For example, a nurse who was in a nursing program could learn how to deal with the violence they have to face in the hospitals. Did you know that more individuals with RNs are not practicing nursing, that they’re doing other things? And why do you think that’s the case? A survey was done and it said it was because they experienced more violence in that environment than they could take. Violence that comes from their supervisors,

doctors, from patients themselves, and from the family members of patients. You just don't know what nurses have to go through. I didn't know. Yet we need nurses—there's a shortage. That's why they have a bigger problem because there is a shortage. In Atlanta, if you decide you're going to become a nurse and you take a job, the hospital will give you a car for two years as a bonus if you sign a two-year contract.

There is violence not only in the physical sense but the psychological sense. We have more violence towards the people we say we love than anybody else. The way we talk to them. The old adage that "Sticks and stone may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Words don't hurt: They harm. They cause people to harm themselves as a result. If we care about people, we have to care about what we say. You might say, "Well, you know me; I'm just like that." Well, don't be like that. How about being kind and compassionate and sensitive to other people? Many who drop out in the ninth grade do so not because they can't do the academic work, but because of students in the environment pushing them out. They get angry and don't like school anymore and some of them get old enough to go find a gun and come back and start shooting up their classmates and teachers and everybody.

Why do you think they do that? It's because they've experienced a hostile environment from so-called nice people who ignore them. Sometimes to ignore a person can be the most violent thing you can do. "I didn't say anything to him." That's the problem, you didn't say anything! Suppose we had in this university courses for nurses, educators, people who have to be in human resource management, that kind of non-violence awareness education. You have to find a way to let people come into their own. There are ways we can do things that can be much more peaceful and non-violent.

I want to say that we're challenged this century with changing the world. And the young people who are here you have a glorious opportunity to create a new global environment. First we have to start with destroying it, so we'll have something like a planet earth to live on. That's our challenge, our commitment to make that happen. I say to you that we cannot be all that we can be until others have the opportunity to be all that they can be.

Thank you.

Questions & Answers



Q. Dr. LaFayette, in class we talked about defeats and successes throughout the Movement and I learned that Dr. Martin Luther King’s greatest defeat was the Albany Movement. What was your greatest defeat and how did you work on it?

A. Well, there’s a first time for everything . . . and that’s the first time anybody asked me that question. I used to tell Martin Luther King, “Don’t say that.” He said it himself. He said it was true and he called it a “flunk” rather than defeat. He said that was one of our biggest flunks. I understood what he meant; it was just something I didn’t want to hear. Something was accomplished and I went on talk about the things that did happen. And it’s true that some very important things happened in Albany. One of the great things that happened was the freedom singers. They had some beautiful vibrations coming out of there. We also had some really committed students who grew into very important adults who came out of that Movement. It was also a place where people from other large places like Chicago came by the busloads down to the

Albany Movement. What happened with the Albany Movement, and I understand why he said it was a flunk.

I'm going to give you a brief analysis of it so you have the full picture because it's not written anywhere. On November 1, 1961 Charles Sherrod went to Albany to set up the Albany voter registration project, which was sponsored by the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta. We were all in Atlanta and he was assigned to go there. It so happens that November 1 was also the day that the ICC ruling went into effect. The ICC was an interstate commerce commission and that meant that all of the public transportation facilities were desegregated. It came as a result of the freedom acts. They didn't pass them into law. The Kennedys were very smart and learned how to use an existing law and how to apply it. In other words, the ICC rule affected both interstate commerce and discrimination. It meant that you couldn't sell someone tires—say, if you manufactured tires in Ohio— for a higher price in Connecticut than you would sell those tires in Illinois. [After all, you're not showing any discrimination because it applied to commerce.] So how did they apply it to the freedom riders and racial thing? Well, because a bus was a part of interstate commerce because the tires came from one place and the steel came from another, rubber came from another, the paper ticket came from one place and the ink from another—it all involved interstate commerce. You couldn't discriminate, you couldn't discriminate against the exchange of goods. People themselves were involved in interstate commerce when they rode the bus from one state to another. So that ruling went into effect November 1. I remember because that was one of the arrests that I had. Because Charles Sherrod went down to Albany, Georgia and went into the waiting room and they arrested him.

And did he invoke the ICC ruling? They replied, “No, you don’t know about that. You’re in the white section here, so you get arrested.” So when Charles Sherrod was in jail, the ministers decided to come down and have a prayer vigil. You know what the police did in Albany? They arrested all the preachers for praying. So you know what happened? The members came, following the preachers. They were arrested. Word got around to all these other churches throughout the country. They started coming down and having prayer meetings and getting arrested. That’s what the Movement was about. That’s what happens when things don’t start out right. The next day, they understood the ICC ruling and they desegregated the lunch counters and the facilities waiting rooms. What was the Movement about? Getting arrested? Sounds good. What did you try to change? An opportunity to pray in front of the jail? Get a permit and they’ll let you pray. But the way it started out—that’s the point. So they couldn’t get a change or a victory out of Albany because it wasn’t part of the goal of the Movement. It was some action without preparation for a systemic change. If you’re marching for marching’s sake, you might not change anything, particularly if you don’t know what your goals are. If your goal is marching, and you’re marching, then your goal is through. They invited Martin Luther King to come down and join them because all these other preachers were going to jail. Martin Luther King wanted to give support, so he went down with the other preachers and went to jail. People came from all over. Well, nothing substantial came out of it. Birmingham produced the Civil Rights Bill, Selma produced the Voter’s Rights Bill and freedom rights. So, with Albany, Martin Luther King called it a flunk. That’s why he called it that. I agreed with him. I just opposed the terminology.

Nevertheless, you have to look at the positives. Some great people got involved and commitment occurred. But he was talking about a substantial achievement of an important goal. That’s what that

was all about. So when he went to Birmingham, it was planned and there was strategy. There was much more thought given to what the goal was and how we were going to reach it.

Q. She was also asking your personal example of a flunk.

A. That's also an original question. Let me think about it. I can think of some errors I made, but not in the Movement. I'll think about it.

Q. I was wondering with all your work with [the Student Non-Violent Coördinating Committee] SNCC and other organizations—with all the opposition and unrest that you faced—did you find it made people more afraid to work with the Civil Rights Movement or do you think it just fueled their fire to want to go out and do more good? Did it cause fear in people wanting to register to vote and go out and be seen?

A. When I was with students who had been participating in the Sit-in Movement in February in North Carolina, we had conference Easter weekend in Raleigh, North Carolina at Shaw University and we formed SNCC. Following that, we went on the Freedom Rides together the next year, in 1961. Then we decided that if we were able to accomplish all these things as full-time students, what would happen if we volunteered for two years and dropped out? Go to the Peace Corp or Vista? That's the thing that formed the SNCC staff. I decided to be one of those students, along with Diane Nash, John Lewis, and some others. We decided we'd go and volunteer for a couple of years. Well, when I went down to get my assignment [it's a long story], they sent me to Selma, Alabama and people were afraid to get involved. In fact, one of the reasons they had an "X" through Selma before I insisted I take the job was because two other teams had gone down there before and they said the black folks were too afraid and the white folks were too mean.

They told me Selma was the only thing that was left. I said, "I'll take it." [You know, if you take an X and turn it 60 degrees, you get a plus.] I was doing my math on this thing and decided I'd take it. I did find that people were afraid, and for good reason. Now the question is how do you turn the fear around? Why are people afraid? People are afraid that others will bring them harm and injury.

In Selma, the opposition was very clever. You know what they did? If you went down and attempted to register to vote, they would fire your mother-in-law from her job. They'd say, "Can't you do something with that son-in-law of yours or daughter-in-law?" They didn't have to drop bombs in Selma like they did in Birmingham and Montgomery; it was implosion. They would destroy you from the inside. They would break up your family. [The whole process for desegregation of schools in 1954 Supreme Court decision: *Brown versus Board of Education*. The process for desegregating your schools was a petition of a minimum of 10 signatures, presented before the school board. If they ignored it for a certain period of time, you could appeal it and direct it to Federal Court. You know what they did in Selma, Alabama? Ten folks signed a petition for the school Board and in less than three months nine of those people have withdrawn their signatures. They lost their jobs, ran them out of town, intimidated family members.] People said, "You can't accomplish anything there, they're very mean."

They knew how to get to you when they got to your family members. When there's a little trouble on the inside of your family, you're in trouble. That's your source of comfort and love. But that was the tactics they used in the south. They were afraid that it would be impressionably harmful to them. They didn't blow up any churches. They would call in mortgages—requesting they'd be paid up—or they'd take the church away. People were afraid they'd get their loans called in. It was economic

intimidation and family dislocation. You had to leave town when your mother-in-law got fired. That's why people were afraid.

Once we were able to get some people to go register to vote, though, we quickly exhausted those who were not afraid and they suffered. We had to go right into Bocaheta, in Dallas County, to a small community of independent black farmers. They owned their own farms; they were not tenet farmers. They weren't well educated but they were well healed financially. We went over to get them to register to vote. We showed them how to fill out the forms. And then they went and registered to vote. That embarrassed all the middle class, teachers, professors, and well educated folks. [Those people from Bocaheta are going to register to vote; we better get up off it and get down there.]

We had to use every tactic you could imagine to get people out of that fear. The main thing that caused people to overcome that fear was hope. And where do you find hope? You find it when you make a decision that you will appreciate every moment in life. Hope is not about the future; it's an appreciation for the past until you cherish the present moment. There is no future because everyday is the present time. So you enjoy what you're going to do today, and that's what hope is: Everyday. It's not a far dream in the future.

Those people went down and registered to vote. That's what helped them overcome their fear. Tomorrow was dwarfed by the excitement of today. Their fears were the fears of the future. Hope is for everyday. We had to convince them that life is so exciting, to stand up and to register to vote and exercise your rights. Do you realize all these years, it's not just the local sheriff or the local mayor they hadn't voted for, they had never participated in a presidential election? They went to war, they were drafted, they fought, but they didn't vote. They paid taxes and they didn't have representation.

They were going abroad to fight for democracy in a foreign country but they couldn't vote in their own county. So we changed that. That's what we did with the fear. What are you going to do today?

Q. You said that during the freedom rides and Sit-ins you were arrested a lot, beat up, and left for dead at one point. Other than the fact that it was a big cause, how were you able to keep going, keep putting yourself in jeopardy like that?

A. That's a good question. I'll tell you what my mother's analysis would be—she's no longer with us, but she wouldn't mind. She said I'd been hit on the head too many times. Well, I had appreciated so much of the past my whole life—I've had a good life, it's been so exciting. I've been happy. I've done many fine things. I was an only child for the first seven years and my family gave me so much stuff that I opened Christmas presents till July. I was so fortunate, I had so much love—these older woman around me who nurtured me. [I'd go to sleep in their laps.] It was fun. [I just can't imagine other people and the miserable lives they have. I'm sorry, I've never experienced that.] So I figured the rest of my life I could bring some joy and happiness to some folks. That's what kept me going.

I wanted people to experience some happiness like I did, like I do. My wife has been a great substitute for my grandmothers and all those people. That's what life is all about. It's what you do by the way you live. The other thing that keeps me going is the change that I see.

Could I tell you something? We are training people in the Nigeria Delta, folks that kidnap and kill people. We're training and transforming these people. They're putting down their weapons. [They don't want to tell you that they killed 180 people; instead, they'll say they "condemned" 180 people.] They thought that Shell Oil was responsible for them not having good schools in their community,

good roads in their community. They'll say Shell Oil is responsible for the oil spills in their backyard so they can't fish like they used to do with their grandfather when they were kids. They were angry, carried AK47s so they could kill people, and blew up Shell Oil wells.

We went and trained them in non-violence; we took them out of the environment—that's the first thing you have to do—get them out of the environment. See a new perspective on life, a new community, a new way of looking at life. Then we'd sit them back. We took them to Shell Oil to have a conversation (not to negotiate), just to “conversate.” They found out that Shell was giving money to the government and high taxes, but the money was not allocated for social services and social needs of the community. It's true that Shell is guilty of some things like not people from the local community. But it's a circular thing—chicken and egg. You're not going to hire people who are blowing up your stuff and put them in the office. There had to be some changes.

First thing you had to do was get some information. So what we did was get them connected so they can start talking. These same people we trained are now in other areas training other militants. We trained about 350. They now have hit about 2,000 that they have trained and converted to non-violence. One of the things that keeps me going, and it keeps me going because I can see the power of non-violence, is the power to change.

I went to Palestine (and I'm going again in January), where people want more and more and more. The first thing they told me was, “You don't understand our problems, they're not like the problems in the U.S. Those Israelis, they're different from the white folks over in the U.S.” So I said, “Let's talk.” You have to give people a chance to talk; you don't want to hurt their feelings. You want to find out why people feel the way they do. I told them, “You all were discriminated against, these

people have taken your land. You were occupied. Man, at least you know where your land is. We don't know where our land is. Don't give me no sob story about how bad it is. You're not the only one suffering in the world. And to be honest with you, brother, if you present a threat to folks, they're going to respond. The question is how do we achieve peace? First of all we have to recognize the violence that we do that causes other people to react. That's where you have to start.

How do you contribute to your own catastrophe? I'm not talking about blaming the victim. I'm talking about helping the victim recognize how they participate in causing the problems that they suffer.

You know what the real deal is? It's not out in the public, so this is the first time some of you will hear this. We're training on the other side. We're training Israelis. We have an institute in Israel where we train Israelis in non-violence. We go across the border and train Palestinians as well. We train children and people who work with children because we want to seed a new world. Some people are so swirled up in the problem, there is a blindness that takes place and until we are able to get the right kind of contact lens for them they're going to see things the way they want it. We're working on that, too. You see, the reason people are violent is because they are concerned about how people are going to see them—the perspective that other people might have of them. They say, “I have to be violent because people think I'm scared. I'm showing I'm not scared. So if they're going to blow something up in my neighborhood, I will blow something up in their neighborhood. Tit for tat, eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.” In the first place, they don't even know where it's coming from.

So I have to go philosophical here. Hammurabi, who was a great law giver like Moses, proclaimed that if you knock out my eye, I knock out yours, you knock out one of my teeth, I knock out one of

yours. But this leads us down to a blind, toothless society. And, in doing what you did, did you achieve your goal? No. Violence will destroy you. And the way it destroys you is to make you a destroyer yourself because you bring out the worst in yourself.

Why not look at a way to make your enemy your ally? That is one way of defeating the force of your opponent. Get your opponent to use force in collaboration with you. When I grew up, I grew up with a shotgun in my head: The Russians had missiles pointed at us and we had bomb shelters we could run to at school—Civil Defense—where you ran to if you heard the siren, because the Russians were coming. I grew up in the 40's and 50's with all of that. They taught us how to curl up under the desks, to run and hide. That was our reaction. Fear. They were our enemies; we had all kinds of names that we called them. Chinese—we had names for them; Japanese—we had names for them. Now they ride in together up in the space station together, share the same platform. In other words your enemies can become your friends. If you find something in common, you can share it.

My goodness, think about the Middle East. It is rich with history; it is so beautiful. I have never seen such beautiful vegetation going through Israel and looking over the Jordan River, to see where Solomon wrote his poems. Suppose they decide to find a way to work together and use their energies and their talents? So I challenge them, I say, "What are you doing with all that brain power that you've got blowing people up?" I'm hard and the reason why is because I don't have time. I am too old now; I have to get to the point. It's not that I'm impatient; it's that time is running out. You call handling your problem by blowing somebody up? I have questions about that.

The real deal is this is what has been cultivated on both sides is conflict in the schools between the Israeli children fighting each other and there's conflict in the schools among the Palestinians.

There's no unity, they are fighting each other, their neighbors, beating each other up. Violence has

taken root in the youth. They're supposed to be fighting the enemy and they're beating up each other. What have they been teaching them? That's the problem. Then you got their attention – let's start with them and that's what we do. We start with the youth, helping them to understand that conflict is real and always exists and always will, but you don't have to respond to conflict by using violence.

Conflict is like fire, it can be used for good or you can consume everything. You can heat your house or you can burn your house down. You have to decide whether or not to keep the fire under control. Conflict is not the problem—it can be stimulating, it can be educational, inspirational—but being able to manage it and respond in a responsible, caring way remains the challenge.

My wife's mother, my mother-in-law, when we first got married we had a conflict—it's so long ago we don't even remember what the conflict is about. It wasn't a big thing. I went to my mother-in-law [See, I'm smart.] and said, "I've got a problem and I need your help." She looked at me and said, "Young man [that's all she called me], let me tell you this. Two people are going to have conflict. If two people agree on everything all the time, one is unnecessary. So, try to be necessary."

Q. Dr. LaFayette, as a United States citizen and a citizen of the world, I am deeply disturbed and troubled by the response of our government to what happened during Hurricane Katrina, to our lack of response, our total failure. I'm also deeply disturbed and worried about education in inner cities. I had the good fortune to listen to Jonathan Kozol in this very room last year and I better appreciate the inequities in education that we have. I am also very worried and concerned that African Americans (males in particular) appear to fill our prisons and I just don't know how to get my head around it. I know there's been great success since Dr. King and great improvement in our world; however, we still have so much to do. Could you give us a little take on what you think?

A. Did you know there was a vote in the U.N. on passing a resolution, where the essence of it addressed how juveniles not be given life sentences? Every member of the U.N. supported that resolution, with the exception of the U.S. There was one lone vote that supported juveniles being given life sentences or capital punishment. That was our U.S. representative to the U.N. I was a little disappointed myself. Here's the deal: In order for people to be filthy rich, they feel that they have to be greedy. Take more than they need. This is my take on racism. Some people think that white folks are mean and they don't like black folks and other people who are considered minorities. That's not true. I can tell you that from my personal experiences. In the Movement, in the sit-ins the first person that was arrested was Paul LaPrat, an exchange student. He was the first person beaten up and arrested on account of us. He didn't have trouble getting some food, but he was with us. They wanted him to take the punishment. I don't remember a situation I was in where folks got arrested where there wasn't white folk. They didn't get arrested, they got killed. More white folks got killed in the Civil Rights Movement than blacks. They got killed in the Selma, Alabama for trying to get support for a democratic society. The largest number of folks arrested in the freedom rides were young Jewish women from Chicago. Young Jewish women from Chicago—it was a class; the professor said he was going on the freedom ride, and they went too.

What I'm getting at is this: Our analysis has been the problem. When we desegregated the lunch counters, who knew white folks we're going to organize a boycott against the department stores? These were Southern whites. I never saw a white person jump up and leave the movie because some black person had come in and sat down. I didn't see them run off the bus. But they're scared to be sitting next to us on the airplane. I know this because I fly a lot. The majority of white folk . . . no. I can't buy that. You've got a few people, and that's what you're talking about, who've been able to put themselves in powerful positions and make decisions.

Look at color. You have some white folks trying to get tan. I've seen some white guys with dreadlocks that you wouldn't believe. My hair couldn't even get like that. He worked on that, brother. So, the first thing is the analysis that we have to get straight. It's not white folk, it's a few people and by the way, different colors, who are going to find a line of demarcation. The only reason why the color becomes a factor is because of the high visibility. You can tell one if you see one. Sometimes.

In Nashville we tried to desegregate the movie theatres and we were having negotiations with the manager. I asked, "Have you had any black people come in your movie theaters?" He said, "No, we never had that." I said, "What are you talkin' about? I know two that went to your movie last night." We had him set up. We brought these two girls in from Louisiana. In Louisiana they had 2000 black folks going across the color line. [In fact, I see a couple people passing right now.] So, a lot of white folks are actually black. And some real white ones are albinos. Those are really white people. Their whiter than the white folks; you have to back up when they come around. It ain't about color; that's the point I'm trying to make. When we brought these girls in, he jumped high cause he realized they could have passed. So he set up a white guy out in front of the movie theater to spot black folks. Five of them slipped in the next night. He got fired because he couldn't tell white folks from black folks. He rejected a white woman who had a tan, sun tan. She was a street walker; she put her hands on her hips and was hollering at him, almost hyperventilating because he thought she was a "N . . ."

Analysis is this: Economics. The black men that you find in jail becomes "re-slavery." They're trying to find some people that they can get to work for free. The only way you can do that is by saying, "Three strikes and you're out." [Which means you're "in."] They get those prisons ready. They look

at those suspensions in the fourth grade and decide how many jail cells they're going to need, because they figure those suspensions won't make it to college so they're going to have to have a place for them, too. They give them free scholarships to the prison. In fact, they don't even have to apply for a loan. They got them for life, because they're going to be in and out and back in again. I got a cousin, same age I am. He's spent four-fifths of his life so far in jail. [Come out for vacation and back in again. That was his life. It was violation of probation.]

What can we do about it? Well, we've got to get some new legislation passed that corrections should be for correcting, not punishment. If someone has done wrong, what you have to do is re-educate while you have them incarcerated. [And, by the way, the career criminal at age 11 is the first time most get in conflict with the law—life criminals at age 11.] What we have to do is take the incarceration period as an educational period where we redesign lives and plans for the future. We should make an assessment in terms of a person's skills and abilities, figuring how best to do good. People sell drugs. You've got lots of people who sell drugs; then just send them to pharmaceutical school. Their drugs are probably no worse than the ones you get there. So if they're into that—send them to school so they can be trained and be legal.

Like marijuana, they give it to people with illness. So people say this is for medicinal purposes. My grandfather used to say that. He would say I'm going to the drug store. I knew where he was going: the liquor store. He said he was going to get some medicine. That was his medicine: rum. He was Cuban so he smoked cigars and drank rum. He lived to be 96 years old. He smoked a cigar every single day. [In fact, in Cuba you have more men per population over 100 years old than any other group. I don't know why, but that's a fact.]

You've got to change policies so that those policies will result in positive change rather than punishment. It's like in school, why would you put somebody out of school when obviously they need more school? No, this person should be required to work. I know. I used to be principal of a high school. I had my own chain gang. If a student did something wrong, he would have to come to school on Saturdays. He obviously needed more school, not less. So we didn't put anybody out; we put them in.

If you're put out with somebody, put them in. Don't put them out. Let them come to school on Saturdays and have the teachers come back and teach math and science. We have also got to get them into organizations. After all, kids drop out of school because they don't have any social connections with other students. By ninth grade, if they don't belong to a club or got a little group or something like that, school becomes boring. You've got to find those who are loose wires and be able to reconnect them. Students would take care of each other if they knew how to do that. You don't just leave them behind, bring them in.

It's the policies—I have to say the policies are deliberate. I wish I could say this was happenstance, but no. People have decided that some folks are going to have nothing [I'm not talking little of nothing, I'm talking nothing] and there are other folks who are going to have all and more than they will ever need. Those are folks we cannot have representing us. We have to become wiser and more participatory.

Democracy is a political expression of non-violence. True democracy. We have to make it work. And the way you make it work is to work it. You just can't have people going out voting once or twice a year. They have to go to town meetings and they have to find what's wrong and participate.

To find out who really represents them, not who can get elected. The person who gets elected might not represent you. You must have a say in government. Voice in government might make the difference.

In the meantime, suppose we had students from Salve Regina volunteering in a training school offering non-violence courses because they were taught here on campus. That would be part of their course credit. We'll flood those students, and they'll have partners and we'll get them in college once they get out of there. Have a charter school on campus—those students wouldn't be able to get away. If they drop out, that means they're going to drop in your house when you're not at home. So what you do is kidnap them now when you have the chance and don't let them out of your sight. Get them some new activity. We have enough people who can do that—committed folks. We need directive programs.

We are more than they are; we outnumber them. We ought to capture them, capture their minds, redirect them. Some of the smartest young people I've found have been in jail for doing dumb things. So you have to ask why. It's because they feel emotionally rejected. They don't feel a part of anything, disconnected. That's why they go and get some guns and go and shoot up everybody. Why do you think somebody would shoot up everybody they grew up with? Because they don't feel part of them. Don't let them. If you know somebody in class right now who gets isolated, and gets pick at, and about whom they say nasty things and bully them: Don't let them be out there by themselves. They're going to come back and get you or somebody else that you love. Make them feel part of the community. Bring them in. That's right. Redirect them. That's our challenge.