

# Dr. king and socrates: a nonviolent campaign



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In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation, self-purification and direct action. Socrates, a man hailed as one of the greatest philosophers of all time, and Doctor Martin Luther King, known to the world as one of the greatest public speakers and advocate of civil rights, both utilized nonviolent campaigns by voicing their opinions in intelligent ways and surrounding themselves with people who shared similar views.

Doctor Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech will forever be known as one of the greatest speeches in history. Its flawless wording persuades listeners to join him in his fight for what he believes is right; the fight is, however, not physical but moral. He fought for what he believed in, and helped African Americans gain rights in a society that often denied them access to education, opportunity and wealth. In "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", Doctor King states that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

This ideology was put into action when he refused to sit while other African Americans in Birmingham, Alabama were being targeted for bombings and racial attacks by the whites in the town. Socrates spread his intelligence by conversing with individuals in a one-on-one situation where the individual was questioned about the truth in what he believed in. He proclaimed by precept and example a standard of moral conduct above that which prevailed among the recognized leaders of the society in which he lived.

In "Crito", Socrates states "what we ought to consider is not so much what people in general will say about us but how we stand with the expert in right and wrong, the one authority, who represents the actual truth." In saying

this, it demonstrates his belief that through nonviolent action one can prove himself to be right or wrong, regardless of what society thinks. Both written in settings of jail cells, they demonstrate how Socrates and Doctor King effectively voiced their opinions.

Throughout the South, Doctor Martin Luther King had supporters almost everywhere he went. He stood to defend African Americans, an idea that was shared by some whites as well. He also had enemies who were ready to block the way of any progress Doctor King tried to make. Similarly, Socrates had many disciples, such as Plato and Aristotle, who studied and followed Socrates' teachings. He also made many enemies as evidenced by the court that ordered him put to death later in his life because of how he corrupted the youth.

In "Crito", Socrates is talking about the government while he is incarcerated and he says " I cannot abandon the principles which I used to hold in the past simply because this accident has happened to me. " He states that he can't give into the pressure that is put on him by society, and that he is going to overcome it by a nonviolent campaign. Similarly, Doctor King states that " Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. " Saying this, Doctor King means that when society influences one person, it is influencing the rest of the people the same way, and that one cannot give in to the pressure of society.

Both Doctor King and Socrates believe that by overcoming the pressure of society and surrounding oneself with supporters, one can have a successful nonviolent campaign. If Doctor Martin Luther King and Socrates were cellmates, Doctor King would most likely ask to be moved to solitary

confinement. Joking. In reality, the two men are very similar as they both strongly oppose giving into society's influence and they both held a nonviolent campaign against their respective societies.

The methods both men used to campaign were by voicing their opinions in intelligent ways and surrounding themselves with people who shared similar views. From this, there is a sense in which each of them arose from the dead by virtue of the fact that his teachings and the causes that he served became more alive and powerful after his death than during the times when he was living. Similar, both of these men influenced the societies of their time and helped question the morality of the individual through nonviolent campaigning.