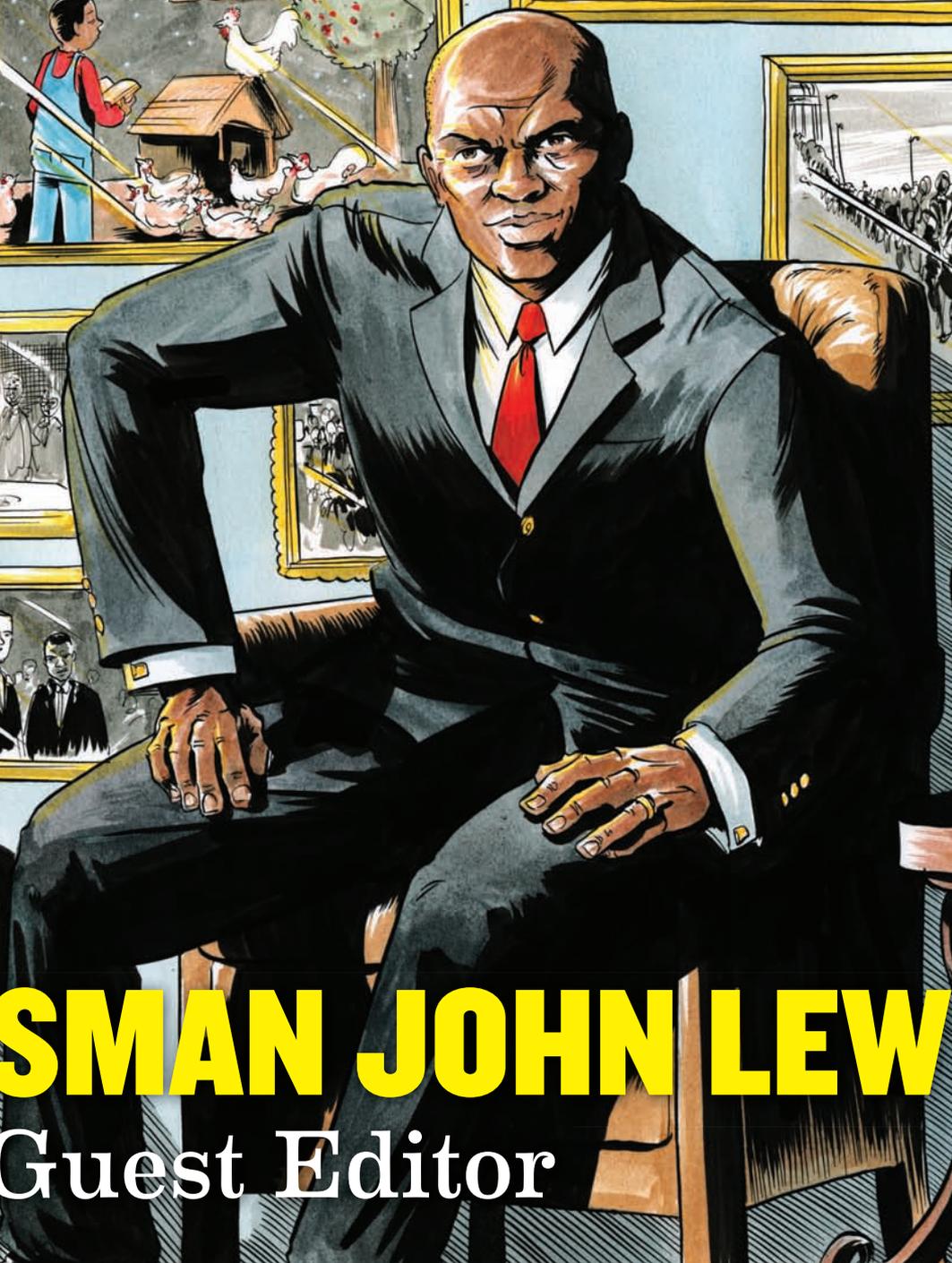


THE  
FUTURE  
OF  
NONVIOLENCE



AUG. 1 - 7, 2013 VOL. 42, NO. 14



# CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS, Guest Editor



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## CONTRIBUTORS

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Dustin Chambers, Joeff Davis, Wes Duvall, Alyssa Pointer, Nate Powell



DUSTIN CHAMBERS

## Letter from the editors

Earlier this year, we started a conversation about inviting someone to guest edit an issue of *Creative Loafing*. We wanted to know what our newspaper would look like if we handed over the reins to someone we admired and respected. How would they fill the pages? What would they want to say? We created a dream list of people with whom we'd love to collaborate.

At the top of that list was Congressman John Lewis, D-Atlanta. There are many reasons to admire Lewis: because

his work in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Civil Rights Movement made our country a better place; because he's the last living speaker from the 1963 March on Washington; because at 73 years old, he continues to fight for justice and peace in the House of Representatives; because his commitment to nonviolence has been unwavering throughout his lifetime. Lewis makes us proud to live in Atlanta. Like the Auburn Avenue mural of the congressman puts it, Lewis is a hero.

Beyond our admiration for Lewis, we learned that *March: Book One*, the first volume of Lewis' graphic novel memoir co-authored with his staffer Andrew Aydin and illustrated by Nate Powell, would be published on Aug. 13, 2013. The timing was right and Lewis agreed. Through coordination with Aydin, Lewis has guided us to this issue focused on the future of nonviolence.

— DEBBIE MICHAUD, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,  
WYATT WILLIAMS, CULTURE EDITOR

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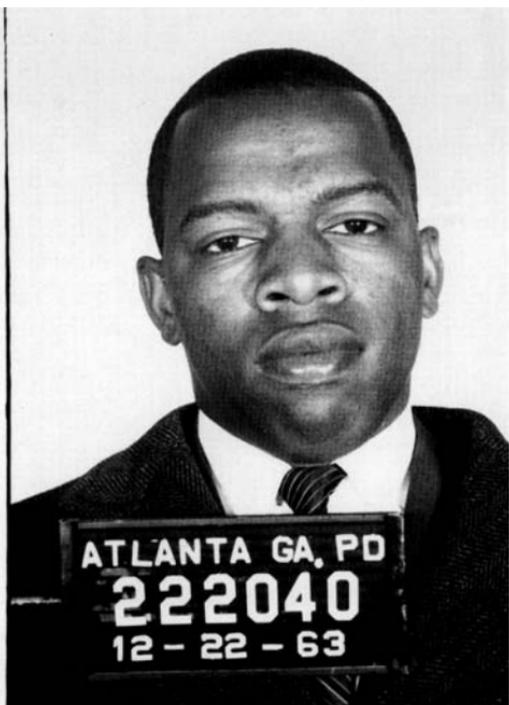
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# A note from guest editor Congressman John Lewis



COURTESY JOHN LEWIS

I feel deeply honored to have the opportunity to serve as a guest editor of this wonderful publication. I have often said that without the media, the Civil Rights Movement would have been like a bird without wings. Today more than ever, we need a diverse, vibrant media and *Creative Loafing* serves an important role in our community.

Some of the people who have contributed to this issue I have known for a long time. Others I have known not so long but I have come to enjoy working very closely with them. A few I have never had the opportunity to meet. But we have all come together to discuss the philosophy that has guided me nearly my entire life: nonviolence.

I believe that we must respect the dignity and worth of every human being. I believe that every single one of us has a contribution to make to our society. And I believe that it must be the mission of every person, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, to leave this little piece of real estate we call Earth a more just and peaceful place.

Our society faces many struggles. No one person can tackle all of them. And no one person can tackle any of them on his or her own. Yet each of us can do something. That is why I decided to write *March*. It is my hope that this graphic novel trilogy will tell

young people, and those not so young, the story of my life in the Civil Rights Movement and why I chose the path of nonviolence. I hope it will show you that, no matter where you come from or where you went to school, you can make a contribution.

People need to be speaking up and speaking out about the injustices we see every day. They need to be organizing and working together to solve the complicated problems facing our society. But in order for nonviolent action to be successful, it requires discipline. There are specific ways in which a nonviolent campaign must be conducted for it to achieve its objectives. In these graphic novels, with my collaborators Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell, we have worked very hard to detail the tactics used during the movement and the discipline behind them.

This has been an unbelievable journey. I never thought I would do things like write a graphic novel or go to Comic-Con. But none of us can know what the future has in store for us, and we must follow what I like to call the Spirit of History. We have to be creative and find new ways to, as Gandhi said, be the change we seek in the world.

Keep the Faith,  
John Lewis

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# AN EXCERPT FROM *MARCH:* BOOK ONE

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With co-author Andrew Aydin  
and illustrator Nate Powell,  
Congressman John Lewis  
recounts his life and experiences  
in the Civil Rights Movement

BY JOHN LEWIS, ANDREW AYDIN,  
AND NATE POWELL

### ***March: Book One***

By Congressman John Lewis, Andrew  
Aydin, and Nate Powell. Top Shelf Comix.  
\$14.95. 128 pp. Out Aug. 13.

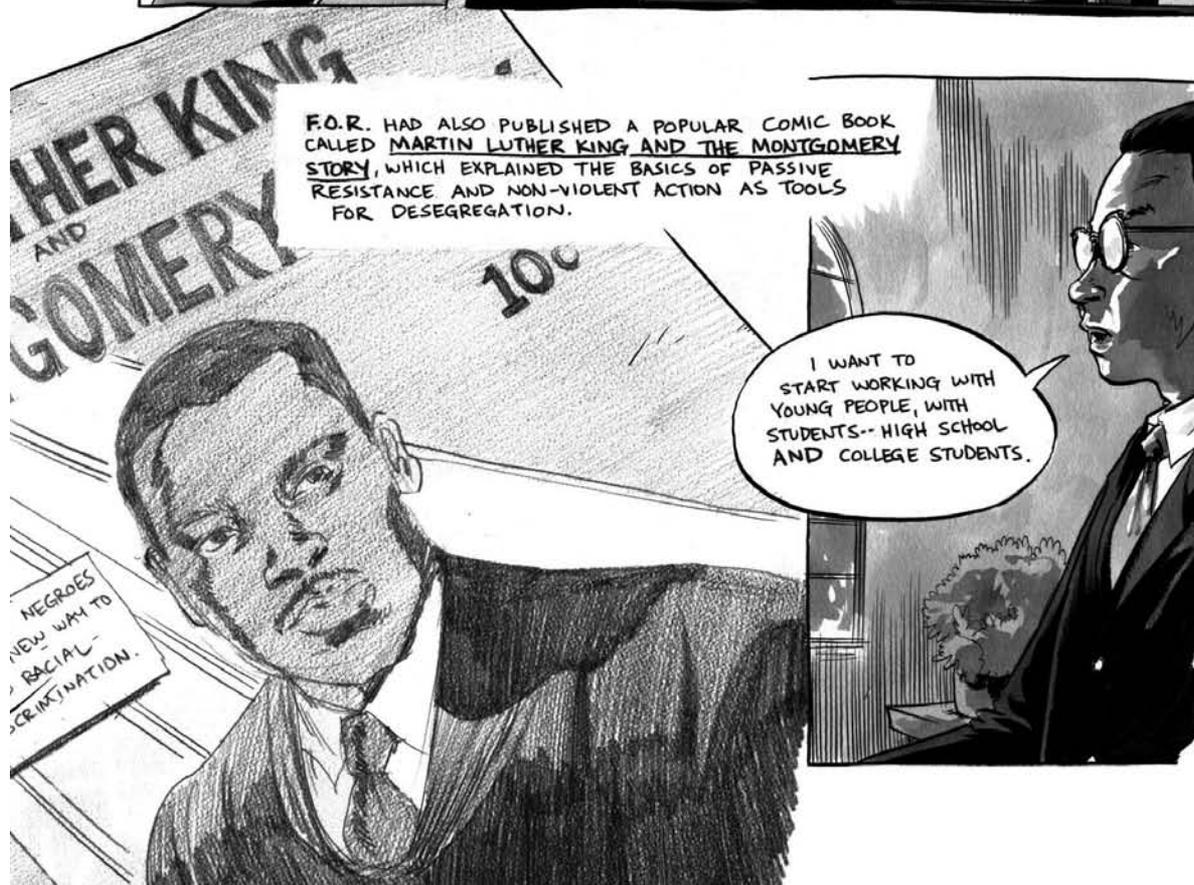
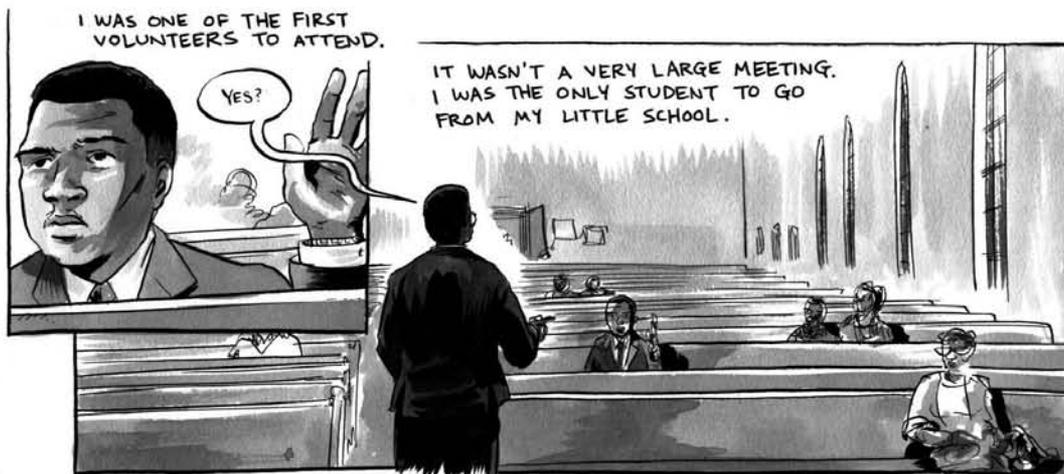
### **John Lewis and Andrew Aydin sign *March: Book One***

1 p.m. Sat., Aug. 17. Barnes and Noble,  
2900 Peachtree Road. 404-261-7747.  
barnesandnoble.com.

### **Decatur Book Festival Keynote Address by John Lewis**

8 p.m. Fri., Aug. 30. Schwartz Center  
for Performing Arts, Emory University,  
1700 N. Decatur Road. 404-727-5050.  
decaturbookfestival.com.

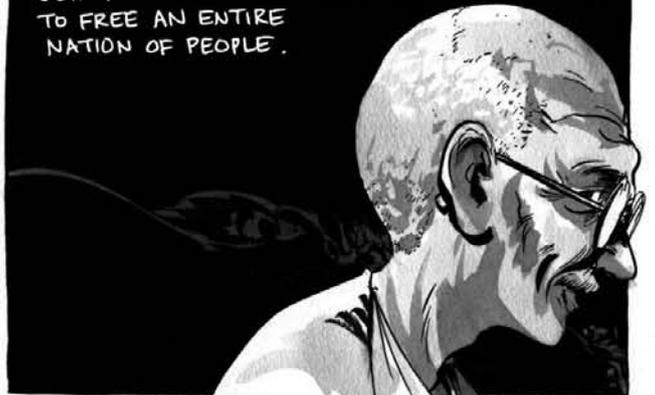




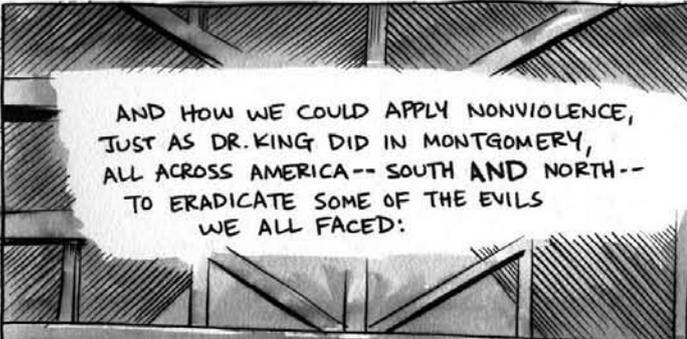
JIM TALKED ABOUT THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT, ABOUT WAR RESISTANCE, ABOUT NONVIOLENCE.



HE SPOKE OF GANDHI, THIS LITTLE BROWN MAN FROM INDIA USING THE WAY OF NONVIOLENCE TO FREE AN ENTIRE NATION OF PEOPLE.



AND HOW WE COULD APPLY NONVIOLENCE, JUST AS DR. KING DID IN MONTGOMERY, ALL ACROSS AMERICA-- SOUTH AND NORTH-- TO ERADICATE SOME OF THE EVILS WE ALL FACED:



THE EVIL OF RACISM,



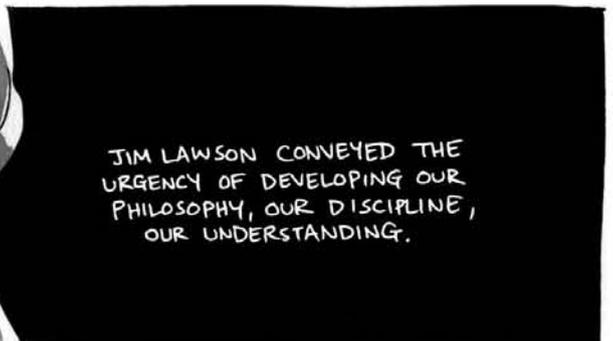
THE EVIL OF POVERTY,



THE EVIL OF WAR.



JIM LAWSON CONVEYED THE URGENCY OF DEVELOPING OUR PHILOSOPHY, OUR DISCIPLINE, OUR UNDERSTANDING.

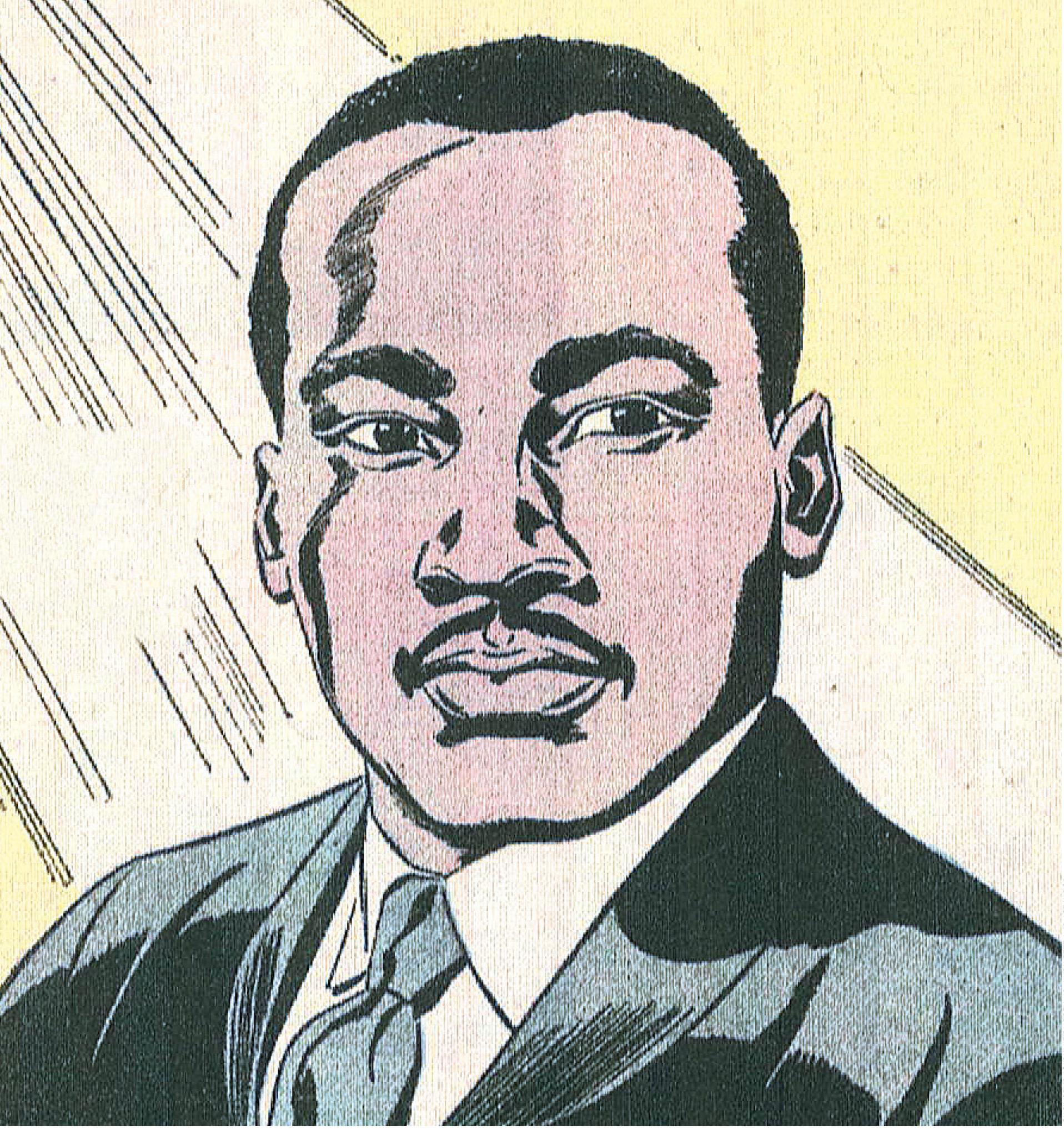


HIS WORDS LIBERATED ME.

I THOUGHT, THIS IS IT...

THIS IS THE WAY OUT.





# The comic book that changed the world

*Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story's*  
vital role in the Civil Rights Movement

BY ANDREW AYDIN

I first heard about the Civil Rights era comic book *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* from Congressman John Lewis in the spring of 2008. I had been working for him less than a year when I was driving him to an event and we got to talking about comic books. I remember Lewis sitting in the front passenger seat as he gently teased me about attending Atlanta's comic convention Dragon Con. But then he said, "You know, there was a comic book during the movement. It was very influential." I was captivated. Could a comic book have played a role in the Civil Rights Movement? If so, how? Could we do it again?

As I came to learn, the story of *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* is tightly tied to the Civil Rights Movement's early days. The true breadth of its history, of who made the comic book and what role it played, has been largely overlooked. Yet, it is a powerful example of an unconventional idea serving as an extraordinary source of inspiration.

The comic tells the story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which successfully helped integrate that city's public transportation. To say that the idea to produce a comic book about civil rights in 1957 was a radical idea would be to understate the overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward comic books at the time. Just three years prior, near the height of McCarthyism, growing anti-comic book sentiment came to a head when the U.S. Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency conducted an investigation and held hearings about the negative effects of comic books on America's youth.

So how did a comic book like *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* come to be made? And in what ways did this comic book play an influential role in the Civil Rights Movement? Well, to answer these questions, I guess you have to start at the beginning.

**COMIC BOOKS, AS WE KNOW THEM**, came into existence in the 1930s, and by the time America entered the Second World War they were big business. Young people devoured them. As the Allied powers claimed victory, Captain America and his colleagues were selling tens of millions of issues per week. For every comic book sold, five to 10 young people were reading it. Comic books reached more people than any other medium in America. Columbia University professor of journalism David Hajdu estimates in his book *The Ten-Cent Plague* that their average monthly circulation jumped from close to 17 million copies in 1940 to 68 million in 1953.

In the postwar years, as the world struggled to rebuild and cope with the arrival of the Atomic Age, young people's taste in comic books took a dark turn toward crime, horror, and lust. Tensions building throughout the war years exploded into comics as the world sifted through the consequences of global



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conflict. Critics emerged, lambasting comic books as a cause of increasing juvenile delinquency. Churches warned of their dangers. Schools and libraries organized burnings where young people were urged to throw their comic books onto bonfires to purge the lingering scourge from their homes.

Congress, never one to miss a bandwagon, held its hearings on the connection between comic books and juvenile delinquency. Critics such as psychiatrist Fredric Wertham testified to the negative impact of comic books on young people and the corrupting influence of morally ambiguous violence, horror, and sex. The hearings created a firestorm of publicity and public pressure that devastated the comic book industry, despite no significant new legislation being passed.

In an effort to contain the damage, comic book publishers created a self-regulating body that would administer the "Comics Code." Its stamp of approval helped quell the fears of nervous distributors and retailers fearing backlash from potentially controversial content. The Comics Code did little to change public attitudes, and the comic book industry withered.

At the same time in Montgomery, Ala., a movement was born. On Dec. 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to move from her seat on a Montgomery Area Transit bus. Within hours, a response that would change the course of American history began to take shape.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted for more than a year before Montgomery city officials yielded and allowed bus passengers to sit freely regardless of race. The desegregation of Montgomery city buses was a victory, but, perhaps more importantly, from it emerged new leaders and new alliances that would shape the political dialogue on civil rights and racial equality in the coming decade. The Montgomery Improvement

Association (MIA), which organized carpools, negotiated with Montgomery city leaders, and coordinated legal challenges with the NAACP during the boycott, was led by a charismatic young preacher from Atlanta: Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

During the boycott, King developed a relationship with Rev. Glenn Smiley, a white Methodist minister from Texas, who was then serving as a field secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). As participation in the boycott grew, Smiley helped organize nonviolence training, supplying materials and publications for the MIA efforts. Ultimately, King and Smiley became so close that it was Smiley who sat next to King aboard the first desegregated Montgomery city bus on Dec. 21, 1956.

Following the victory of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, FOR sought to capitalize on its success and spread the "Montgomery Story" as an example of the potential of nonviolent action for advancing social change. Relying on its experience publishing literature, FOR turned to a format nearly as publicly reviled as the cause of racial equality: comic books. At the center of this effort was FOR's Director of Publications, Alfred Hassler.

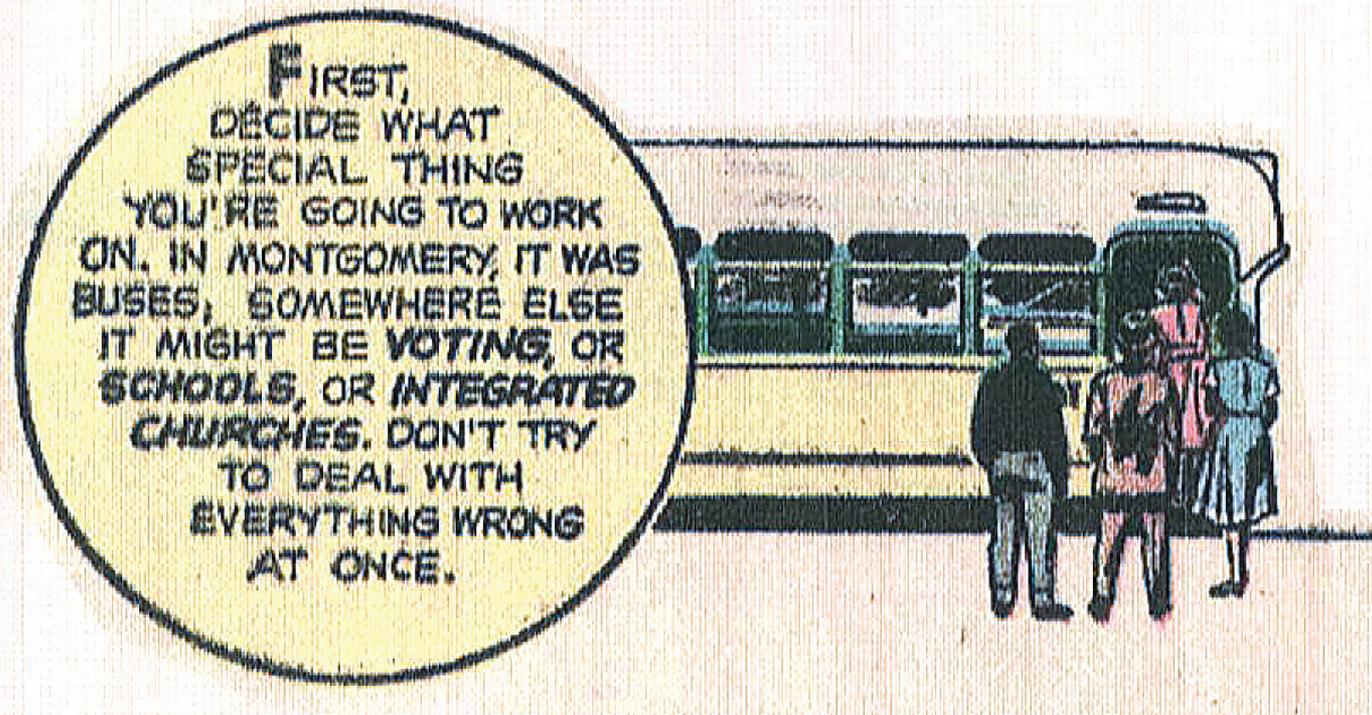
Hassler had already written numerous anti-war books and articles, including a book about his time in prison as a conscientious objector during World War II. But in 1956, Hassler had the idea to write a comic book.

"It was actually quite funny," Hassler's daughter, Laura, wrote to me, "that my father thought of producing a comic book in the '50s. Alfred was a great lover of literature, good writing and subtlety. In the era of Superman, Wonder Woman and Archie and Veronica, he was definitely not a comic book fan! In fact, we were not allowed to have them as children, and I can remember going to a friend's house on weekends, lying around in the 'shack' outside their house, reading her comic books!"

Laura believes it was her father's continued fascination with new trends and finding creative ways to reach broader audiences that drove his work toward comic books. After all, if the comic book hearings of 1954 had unquestioningly affirmed one fact, it was that comic books have the potential to exert great influence.

Richard Deats, FOR's Director of Communications in the 1990s, laid out FOR's motivation and purpose behind the comic in a 1997 letter, saying, "The comic book was originally intended to convey to semiliterate persons the story of nonviolence and its effectiveness as seen in the Montgomery movement. The medium of the highly popular comic book was believed to be the best way to reach masses of exploited African-Americans."

Hassler, who had never before written or produced a comic book, brought his idea to life with the help of a grant from the Fund for the Republic, a nonprofit institution advocating for civil rights and civil liberties. In order to convince the or-



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### The Comic Book That... from p.15

organization's board that his idea was feasible, he had to produce a script, art samples, and demonstrate community interest.

Hassler was referred to a man named Benton Resnik who became the crucial creative link between FOR and the comic publishing world. Together, Resnik and Hassler collaborated to bring the comic book to life. Many of Hassler's letters are archived at Swarthmore College's Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility, including those with Resnik. The earliest letter is dated March 12, 1957.

At the top of the page in bold letters, it says, "GRAPHIC INFORMATION SERVICES." The address listed below is 17 East 45th Street, New York 17, N.Y. The letter reads:

Dear Mr. Hassler,

I am enclosing herewith a suggested story treatment for the proposed booklet, *THE MONTGOMERY STORY*. I would appreciate your comments.

Once the treatment is accepted by you, we would then proceed to two or three pages of script and art work for presentation to the Fund.

Cordially,

Benton, J. Resnik

Resnik, then the general manager of Toby Press, is listed in the indicia of several comic books, including *The Black Knight* and *Monty Hall of the U.S. Marines*. Those titles are also

listed among those reviewed by the Committee on Evaluation of Comic Books. Both titles received a "C" or "objectionable" rating, deeming them not "safe for use by children and young people." Toby Press had gone out of business in 1955, a casualty of comics hysteria, and Resnik, like many others working in the comic book industry then, had to find new ways to make a living.

On May 2, 1957, Hassler responded to Resnik's letter:

"The more I have looked at the text of the script for the comic book the more I feel that, while the utilization is alright, the script is too heavy and literary for our purposes. You will recall that what we have in mind is getting to people who have relatively little education."

Hassler appealed to Resnik, "I would assume that you have considerable experience with this problem and I would be glad to have any ideas you have on the subject." Hassler included his revisions to the script and a note expressing his uncertainty over funding from the Fund for the Republic, writing, "I really feel that this initial page has to be as near right as we can get it if we hope to get any substantial favorable response."

By early summer 1957, a painted cover draft was created with King prominently featured, indicating a shift toward emphasizing his role in the growing Civil Rights Movement. His name was added to the title. The cover was featured in an advertisement that Hassler mailed primarily to religious leaders, schoolteachers, and community leaders.

A mislabeled list sent 2,000 mailings to white Southern ministers rather than the black clergy for which they were intended. Unsurprisingly, the response was negative. But the mailings that reached their intended recipients, according to Hassler, were met with great enthusiasm. Hassler expected initial orders of at least 50,000 copies. The MIA, A. Philip Randolph, Rev. Will Campbell, and others each expressed a desire to purchase the comic book.

By September 1957, assurances were given by Ed Reed of the Fund for the Republic that a \$5,000 grant would be proposed to the organization's board of directors. In a letter to Reed, dated Sept. 12, Hassler thanks him for his support, saying, "we feel here that it is imperative that the comic book be produced, and that it be produced without delay. I personally feel sure that the entire edition will be sold out within a fairly short time and that reprints will probably be necessary."

FOR quickly approved the grant, and on Sept. 24, Hassler dispatched a letter informing King:

Dear Dr. King

I am sure you will be happy to know that after long delays the Fund for the Republic has approved the grant to us that will make it possible to publish the *Comic Book* about which I spoke to you during the summer. We will be going ahead with this as rapidly as the Al Capp Organization can move, and as we do so, I would like to have you look at

the script before it is put in final shape just to be sure it has your approval.

Cordially,

Alfred Hassler

Acting Executive Secretary

Three weeks later, Hassler dispatched a complete draft script to King. Several "personal emergencies" including the birth of his first son, Martin Luther King III, delayed his response for which he apologized in an Oct. 28 letter, and offered adulation as well as a few corrections:

"I have read the script very scrutinizingly, and frankly there is hardly anything I could add or subtract. It is certainly an excellent piece of work. I might raise one or two questions concerning factual points. Of course, these points might not necessarily be important because at times you must stray away from the exact facts to create the drama of the situation. However, I will raise them with you. On page 16, box 1 you state that [E.D.] Nixon was the first person to be indicted. I don't think this is actually the case. The Grand Jury indicted everybody simultaneously. Neither was Nixon the first to be arrested. Ralph Abernathy was the first to be arrested. On page 20, box 5 you quote the Negro woman who was slapped: 'I could really wallop her-she is smaller than me.' Actually, there was a white man who slapped the Negro woman. In order to be more in line with the facts it would be better to say: 'I could really wallop him-he's smaller than me!'"

The first copies of *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* were distributed in December of 1957. King's proposed changes were among those included in the final text.

There were other changes to the final edition as well. The cover differed slightly from the one featured in the advertisement. King's image no longer gazed directly at the reader, instead looking away off into the distance. A ray of light shines from above as if cast by a divine hand.

Nowhere in the comic book is there a signature or credit to an artist or writer. Instead, it simply features a reference to FOR on the back cover. It's possible to infer from the correspondence that Hassler and Resnik collaborated on the script, with a little help from King. Yet, the artist remains unknown, perhaps a casualty of history or simply an unsung hero yet to take a bow.

**PUBLISHING A COMIC BOOK** like *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* was remarkable in and of itself considering the times and the popular attitudes toward comic books. But perhaps the more **See The Comic Book That... p.18**

**The Comic Book That... from p.16**

remarkable story is that of what happened after the comic book was published. There were no specialty shops for direct distribution. Most retailers had also come to rely on the Comics Code approval. As a result, few newsstand shelves carried the unapproved FOR comic book.

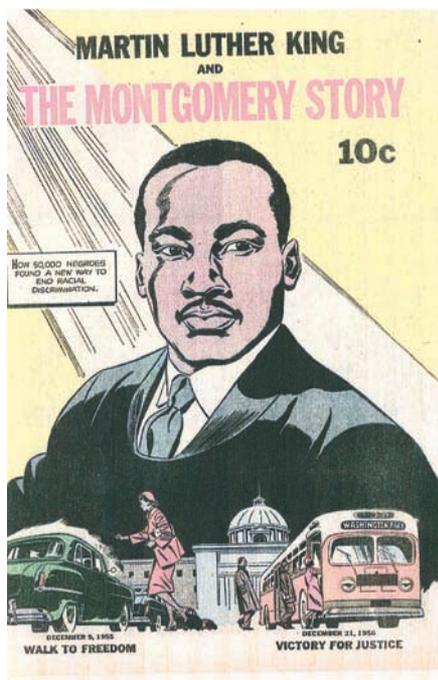
Instead, FOR embarked on an ambitious journey across the South to spread the message of nonviolence using the example of the Montgomery Bus Boycotts. Pacifist and Christian publications such as *The Southern Patriot*, *Four Lights*, *National Guardian*, *Serving Mankind*, and *Peace News* ran articles touting the comic book's release and providing sales information. King issued a statement, included with some copies, endorsing the comic book and explaining his hopes that it would be widely read by both black and white communities.

"We Negroes, particularly in the South," wrote King, "have a special opportunity to demonstrate the power of love to reconcile racial differences. This book will help to spread the word around."

The most successful tactic was the personal dissemination of the comic book. FOR field secretaries Rev. Jim Lawson, Abernathy, and Smiley embarked on a tour visiting black churches and schools in eight Southern states. They held nonviolence workshops and seminars where they distributed *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* as well as the FOR pamphlet "How to Practice Nonviolence."

Lawson was quick to point out to me that the comic book was one tool among many that he and FOR were using in their work to spread the message of nonviolence. "The comic book was in the context of a larger curriculum as I taught it around the South and used it," he said. "Part of its value was that it gave people a brief story of a very effective nonviolent campaign, something that they could refer to and memorize and study. And it also gave them some of the ways in which Martin King had struggled and taught nonviolence. I would have the comic books available free of charge but then I would discuss the Montgomery Bus Boycott for the purpose of insisting it was a major illustration of the power of nonviolence action, of nonviolent politics."

It worked. By 1958, sit-ins were taking place in Wichita, Kan., where Lawson led workshops and distributed the comic book during his tour. The protests didn't receive much media attention, but they were just the beginning. As the last leaves fell and the season turned from fall to winter in 1959, students in Nashville participating in Lawson's workshops at First Baptist Church began preparing their own sit-in campaign. In November and December of 1959, stu-



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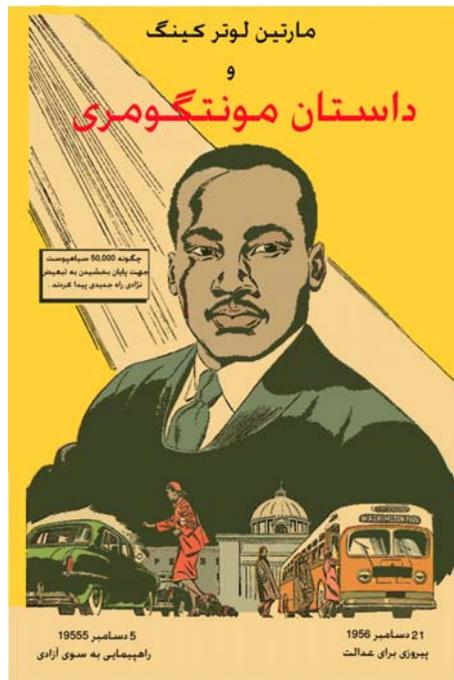
**NEW PANELS:** Since first being published in 1956, *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* has been translated into multiple languages, including Arabic and Farsi (right).

dents trained by Lawson, including Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and Diane Nash led test sit-ins that focused on establishing the fact of discriminatory business practices and avoided direct confrontation.

In January of 1960, *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* found its way to Greensboro, N.C., and into the hands of 18-year-old North Carolina A&T State University student Ezell Blair. After reading it, Blair decided to show it to his roommate, Joseph McNeil. Blair and McNeil had been in contact with local civil rights activists but, as the story goes, it was when McNeil finished reading the comic book that he made a decision of historic importance, declaring, "Let's have a boycott!"

On Feb. 1, 1960, Blair, McNeil, and two other local students staged a sit-in at Woolworth's, becoming forever known as the Greensboro Four. The next day, the front page of the *Greensboro Record* featured a quote from Blair who "declared that Negro adults 'have been complacent and fearful. It is time for someone to wake up and change the situation ... and we decided to start here.'"

**THE STORY OF** *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* did not end with the Civil Rights Movement in the American South. In fact, the full story of its influence probably has yet to unfold. Shortly after the comic book was first published in the United States, FOR published a Spanish-language edition that was printed and distributed throughout Latin America. The art was redrawn but the cover remained the same. Over



HANDS ACROSS THE MIDEAST SUPPORT ALLIANCE

through it page by page to address his concerns. "Strangely, he liked it and helped me edit the sentences that might cause trouble!" Ziada recalled. He granted permission to print it. He then asked, "Could I have a few extra copies for my kids?"

**TO ME, THE HISTORY** of *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* was more than a series of facts and anecdotes to be collected and recounted; it was a call to action. Our time on this planet is short, and it is what we do with that time that defines our societies' futures. Each and every one of us has something unique to contribute, if we are willing to do the work. By luck, by chance, or perhaps by the spirit of history, I found myself working for Lewis, learning his story of how America was changed forever. When I learned about *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, I couldn't help myself, I had to ask Lewis if he would write the next chapter and bring his story of the Civil Rights Movement to comics. His answer changed my life.

It's been five years now. The first volume of what is now a trilogy of graphic novels titled *March* will be released nationwide on Aug. 13. It's been an unbelievable journey to reach this point. There have been a lot of ups and downs, a lot of late nights, working weekends, and missed outings with friends and family. But I have no regrets. I know this is something I had to do, not just for myself, but for all of those left out and left behind. Just as Blair believed in his own time, I believe too many adults have become complacent and fearful.

The American Dream is fundamentally rooted in the principle that our nation is a level playing field. Yet, more and more I have come to believe that here in America, the playing field is no longer level, if it ever was. If we are to bring balance, and thereby strengthen America's core, the only viable path is that of nonviolence. Moreover, this is not just a struggle we face here at home, but one that is also taking place across the globe. I believe it is time for young people the world over to start making some noise, to start pushing and pulling so that the society we leave to our children is a better place for everyone than the one left to us.

It is my hope, my dream, that one day some young little girl or boy will pick up one of these graphic novels, read it, and make the decision to speak up and speak out, to make his or her voice heard, and maybe, just maybe, change our world for the better.

NEWS@CREATIVELOAFING.COM

*This article was adapted for Creative Loafing from Aydin's 2012 Georgetown University master's thesis.*

# The anatomy of a march

A Trayvon Martin rally in Atlanta through the lens of social media

Social media is now an intrinsic part of social and political movements, a way for protesters in Tahrir Square in Egypt to keep tabs on police crackdowns and Occupy Atlanta to rally supporters at the drop of a hat to show solidarity in Woodruff Park. Whether Twitter and Instagram and livestreams have actually helped social movements gain traction or simply created a new generation of armchair activists is still unclear, but the thriving interaction between the two is undeniable.

On July 14, hundreds of people gathered in West End Park to demand justice for Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old Florida teen, after George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, was cleared on all charges related to his death. After the protest, we took a look at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a livestream documenting the march to better understand the intersection of protest and social media.

## TRAYVON

NATIONAL CALL  
6pm Sunday 7/14



West End Park  
1111 Oak St. SW  
Atlanta, GA, 30314

The legal system won't save us  
The clergy won't save us  
The politicians damn sure won't save us  
**ONLY WE CAN SAVE OURSELVES**

Trayvon Martin Organizing Committee trayvonoc.wordpress.com/

@speakerfoxxx | 6:12 PM - 14 Jul 13  
ATL if you're upset about the Trayvon/Zimmerman case come down to West End now and RT this flier.

MARCH   
MARCH BACK

START



@kells1010 | 6:22 PM



@shop\_PLRG | 7:22 PM - 14 Jul 13  
During the #TrayvonMartin rally... ironic to see a rainbow behind a fence. Is there any gold at the...



@Shop\_PLRG | 7:31 PM - 14 Jul 13  
Justice for trayvon rally in the West End



@AmyWSB | 9:18 PM - 14 Jul 13  
Demonstrators marching on Trinity Ave. chants of "Justice for #Trayvon"



@willstamped | 7:07 PM - 14 Jul 13  
Rally over for trayvon Martin in Atlanta Georgia. Marching commences



@OWSAtlanta | 7:44 PM - 14 Jul 13  
Justice for trayvon rally in the West End

@taylorPOLIDORE | 7:46 PM - 14 Jul 13  
let the rain fall.

LIVESTREAM  
Battery gets changed.

LIVESTREAM  
Interrupted by rain.

LIVESTREAM  
Ends when crowd blocks Peachtree St. and Andrew Young International Blvd.

@RMJATL | 8:34 PM - 14 Jul 13  
Just back from another Trayvon Martin Rally in ATL. This one in the West End. Emotions are hot here in ATL. #TrayvonMartinATL

### FACEBOOK EVENT PAGE

- 50** Number of people originally invited from co-organizer Taryn Jordan's Facebook page
- 5,300** Number of total people invited, once the event was shared
- 991** Number of people who said they would attend the rally
- 700** Estimated number of people who attended the rally

### LIVESTREAM

- 2,248** Number of different people who tuned in to the livestream, operated by @jamesfinternet
- 105** Number of times his tweet announcing the livestream was retweeted
- 391,651** Number of Twitter followers of livestream.com, which announced the broadcast
- 2** Number of batteries @jamesfinternet used
- 900** Megabytes of data used during the course of the livestream

\*locations are approximate



ALYSSA POINTER

A crowd of protestors marches down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive toward the CNN Center in reaction to the George Zimmerman “not guilty” verdict on July 15, 2013.

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# The future of nonviolence

Six perspectives on peaceful activism in the 21st century

**T**here is plenty to say — and a great deal has been said already — about the Civil Right Movement’s legacy of nonviolence. But how is that legacy being interpreted and implemented today, and to what ends?

The following series of essays offers six perspectives on peaceful activism in the 21st century: Sen. Nan Orrock, D-Atlanta, writes on the important role of women in the peacemaking process; Shabnam Bashiri details Occupy Our Homes Atlanta’s efforts;

undocumented student Rolando Zenteno reflects on the Dream Act; Georgians for Gun Safety Executive Director Alice Johnson covers reconciliation without firearms; Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II addresses morality and politics; and “Democracy Now!’s” Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan contemplate the media and protest in light of the NSA’s recently revealed surveillance tactics.

The future of nonviolence will be determined by those willing to take action. Here are some of their voices.

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## The crucial role of women in public service

‘A fundamental shift in how we understand peace and security is necessary’

BY NAN ORROCK

As the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington approaches, I’ve been reflecting on that hot August day when I stepped into the streets and joined the Civil Rights Movement. The lessons I learned in those years from John Lewis, Julian Bond, Mary King, and other Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) workers and community leaders have shaped my lifetime of activism.

My opposition to oppression, injustice, and violence has only deepened over time. I marched with SNCC folks against the Vietnam War, and later joined the fight against the launching of the war in Iraq. For 25 years in the Georgia legislature, I’ve worked to increase the ranks of women and people of color in the halls of power. I’ve fought for policies to protect rights and expand opportunities for working people.

A recent meeting of United States women legislators with women leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan both affirmed my belief in the crucial role of women in public service, and alerted me anew to the challenge of attaining peace and justice in the aftermath of war.

As we near the end of a seemingly endless war in Afghanistan — and fear what will become of our Afghan sisters in the process — I believe that a fundamental shift in how we understand peace and security is necessary. Amid the devastation, courageous Afghan women have spent the last 12 years working fearlessly to rebuild lives that include some semblance of basic human rights.

Without a U.S. transition plan that includes a strong commitment to promoting Afghan women’s rights, an accelerated departure of

U.S. security forces could return the country, its people, and the women of Afghanistan to a state of profound instability. We risk leaving Afghan women and girls vulnerable to systematic human rights violations and physical violence. There can be no peace in the region when half its population is oppressed.

Despite our nation’s military dominance and bloated Pentagon budgets, the United States recently took an important step toward implementing a “human security” approach — education, health care, jobs, and international aid — to its foreign policy objectives through the enactment of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (U.S. NAP) in 2011.

Spurred by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, U.S. NAP seeks to address the disproportionate impact of modern warfare on women and girls. The U.S. NAP also underscores the necessity of substantively including women in all efforts to promote peace and security: “Deadly conflicts can be more effectively avoided, and peace can be best forged and sustained when women become equal partners in all aspects of peace-building and conflict prevention, when their lives are protected, their experiences considered, and their voices heard.”

According to the World YWCA, 90 percent of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children. Typically, formal peace agreements are negotiated between the few armed combatants that originally fought the war; groups whose experiences on the battlefield are not easily transferred to the difficult task of building peace.

Women are rarely included or considered in such negotiations, and disproportionately bear the brunt of rebuilding post-conflict and war-torn societies. Yet, women are emerging as critical actors of peace, mobilizing communities across religious and ethnic divides and using their social roles and networks to mitigate violence and mediate peace.

Here in Atlanta, SCLC/W.O.M.E.N. is lifting up the martyrs of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, erecting memorials, and touring busloads to educate about that movement and the lessons learned from it. Georgia WAND, Women’s Action for New Directions, has organized and maintained an 11-year weekly street corner vigil

at the corner of 14th and Peachtree streets in opposition to the wars in the Middle East. I’ll always remember that it was a woman, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), who cast the lone vote in Congress against the Bush administration’s launching of the war in Afghanistan. Across the world, the nation, and right here in Georgia, women leaders are in the forefront, resolving conflicts, finding solutions, and crafting resolutions for a more peaceful world. Herein may lie the hope for our future.

*Nan Orrock has been serving in the Georgia state legislature since 1987.*

## Homegrown protest

‘Those that think the Occupy movement is over haven’t been paying very close attention.’

BY SHABNAM BASHIRI

If you ask most people about the Occupy Wall Street movement, they’ll probably think back to 2011 when thousands of people filled parks and plazas around the country to protest America’s vast economic disparities, and tell you it’s over. Occupy was based around the idea of using civil disobedience — occupying public space, as the movement’s name suggests — to raise awareness of issues of inequality. The park protests were fueled in part by anger at the financial crisis and the Big Bank bailouts that followed. The effects of that crisis were being felt in millions of households around the country in the form of foreclosures, student debt, and unemployment. So when the encampments were dismantled, often using excessive police force, many in the movement started exploring how to use those same nonviolent tactics to effect change in communities around the country. Dozens of Occupy offshoots were formed, tackling everything from housing, medical debt, education, and even disaster relief. Those that think the Occupy movement is over haven’t been paying very close attention.

One of the most successful offshoots is Oc-

cupy Our Homes. Since 2007, 11 million homes have been lost to foreclosure, wiping out trillions of dollars of wealth, devastating communities, and leaving millions more homeowners underwater on their mortgages. The banks who caused the financial crisis have only gotten bigger, and frequently refuse to work with homeowners to provide loan modifications, using fraudulent documents to foreclose on them, and wielding their power and influence in Washington, D.C., to lobby against any meaningful reforms or regulations meant to stop these practices or help keep families in their homes. With few options available, homeowners across the country started teaming up with activists, using nonviolence to stop their foreclosures, carrying out protests at bank branches, and mobilizing neighbors to confront eviction crews. This strategy has worked in many cases, with lenders agreeing to provide loan modifications, principal reduction, or, in some cases, even canceling the mortgage completely and giving a family’s home back free and clear.

But as is often the case with acts of nonviolent resistance, some homeowners have been met with violent repression on the part of law enforcement. Chris Frazer, a DeKalb County homeowner who started working with Occupy Our Homes Atlanta in 2011 after asserting her home was wrongfully foreclosed on, was evicted at 3 a.m. by more than 40 armed sheriff’s deputies, leaving her, her 83-year-old grandmother, and her 3-year-old grandson on the curb in the middle of the night with nowhere to go.

Five years since the start of the financial crisis, the failure of those in power to take action has emboldened more and more people to stand up. After Attorney General Eric Holder testified in a senate hearing this spring that some financial institutions were too big to face criminal prosecution, homeowners and supporters from around the country traveled to the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., to demand otherwise. During a weeklong series of actions, homeowners marched to and set up camp at the DOJ, refusing to leave until Holder responded to their demands. Instead of the attorney general, however, the protestors were greeted by Department of Homeland Security

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officers armed with pepper-rock guns and Tasers. They tased several participants, including Carmen Pittman, a young woman from Atlanta who had fought to save her grandmother's Old Fourth Ward home from foreclosure.

Despite the threat of violence, the participants, many of them elderly or participating in their first protests, stood their ground. Twenty-seven homeowners were arrested and taken to jail, where they refused to give law enforcement their names, and instead provided those of bank executives who they insisted should be the ones arrested in their places. For two days, D.C. jails were booked with multiple people claiming to be Jamie Dimon, Brian Moynihan, John Stumpf, and Richard Davis, the CEOs of JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and U.S. Bancorp, respectively. Seven more women were arrested in another action for peacefully blocking the entrance to Covington & Burling, a white-collar defense firm where Holder was once a partner, and whose clients include Bank of America and Wells Fargo. The women — all of them homeowners fighting foreclosure, and all but one of them grandmothers — were protesting the “revolving door” between Wall Street and Washington.

As the crisis of inequality continues in our country, more and more people are taking brave risks and using nonviolence to fight for justice. As Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Non-violence holds that the universe is on the side of justice and that right will eventually prevail.”

*Shabnam Bashiri has been working with Occupy Our Homes Atlanta since May 2012.*

## Unapologetic, unashamed, undocumented

‘I was a chaplain preaching a gospel they did not wish to hear.’

BY ROLANDO ZENTENO

I was brought to Georgia 12 years ago by my mother to be reunited with my father. She was quickly taken away from me and deported by ICE [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement], but I ended up with my father on the outskirts of Atlanta, between Mableton and Adamsville. Seeing him again made me forget about my mom's deportation and about us being apart for almost a year.

I was nerdy, chubby, and about an inch shorter than all the other kids. I was clearly not Chicano-like and the fact that I was brown and short made me look and feel un-American. When the Dream Act [a Congressional bill that would create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought to the United States by their parents] became a household name, I was baptized a DREAMer, removing the shame of being dubbed an alien, or an illegal, or an illegal alien.

But I came to realize that the term DREAMer creates a minority within a minority complex, one that places the vainglory of academia over the purity of human essence. I am the product of a system. I am no DREAMer; the DREAMer is he who chooses to label me as one.

Beyond the labels and names and everything that comes with them, volunteers in numerous states are organizing in favor of a systematic, nonmyopic change, halting along the way hundreds of deportations by means of community empowerment. Students have adopted civil disobedience as a juxtaposing weapon, raising awareness of the human aspect of migration.

It all begins by acknowledging that Uncle Sam cannot have a demographic in the shadows of anonymity. Furthermore, it cannot have a sub-class of people giving labor to a system and buying from a system without being acknowledged by name. That only reinstates America's former oppressive cycle where we had masters and slaves. Continuing to mask this immigration conundrum would only perpetuate what has become the new-age American exploitation, tolerable of utilizing labor based on the blood, tears, and sweat of undocumented immigrants.

Civil disobedience in Georgia is tackling policies that affect the undocumented community, like the Board of Regents' policy that bans undocumented students from the top five universities in the state. This policy holds firm regardless of whether or not undocumented students have the standardized scores and the grades needed to be accepted.

At Armstrong Atlantic State University last spring, I, along with two other friends, interrupted a Board of Regents meeting. I remember walking into the meeting, staring at them while they looked at me, barely able to keep eye contact. Our roles were reversed. I grew the bravery to introduce myself by name, something they weren't used to. Freedom rang for a bit, or at least it did in my head. To me, the Board appeared ashamed, embarrassed, and nervous. There was a beautiful subtlety that day, the same kind that always takes hold of a person when they conduct an act of civil disobedience — there is something sacred about it, you have to experience it in order to feel it. It's almost like having a religious experience.

When the university's chief of police came forward to ask me to leave, the conference room became still. The Board looked uncomfortable, impatient to expel what stood in front of them. My voice shook gently as the facts about the lives of undocumented citizens in the U.S. poured from my lips, unapologetic and unashamed. The Board seemed uneasy, not so much because of our actions, but because of our words; because my voice was so frail yet so strong; because I was a chaplain preaching a gospel they did not wish to hear; because I was 18 years old, full of insecurities though confident; because people like me ought not to be so veritably defiant, so alive and so empowered, civil yet so disobedient.

When I refused to leave, the police proceeded to arrest me. I walked out of that room feeling as I did the morning I was reunited with my dad. Though handcuffed, I kept my head high knowing I had done the right thing, despite the sardonic smirks I was given. I forgot all about myself and about be-

ing oppressed. No one could've stopped me.

For a minute, I almost forgot I was undocumented.

*Rolando Zenteno was born in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas in southern Mexico, and raised in southwest Atlanta. He currently studies English and Spanish at Armstrong Atlantic State University.*

## Replacing guns with respect and reconciliation

‘We cannot shoot away our fears.’

BY ALICE JOHNSON

We cannot reconcile our differences in this nation with firearms. We cannot reach a level of mutual respect if one side always brings guns to the conversation. We cannot shoot away our fears.

On a fundamental, visceral level, George Zimmerman was afraid of Trayvon Martin. He was afraid of the parts of Martin he did not understand — the cultural influences, the profoundly different views of the world they lived in.

Zimmerman brought a gun to the encounter and Martin died.

There are six steps in Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence. The last — and by far the most important — is reconciliation. It is impossible to find reconciliation with one's opponents with a gun.

The gun lobby knows this. It is the fundamental strategy for the gun industry and the gun rights groups to keep everyone afraid, to prevent that reconciliation between human beings that would make a gun superfluous. They help generate the fears, exacerbate them, and exploit their effects. They sell all sides the guns.

It is impossible to overestimate how far the gun lobby and its apologists stand from **See The Future of Nonviolence p.28**



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those who want to see change in America's gun culture. But that huge chasm is slowly being bridged by those who understand that achieving reconciliation requires completing King's five other steps: information gathering, education, personal commitment, negotiation, and direct action.

Information gathering about the impact of gun violence is ongoing because Congress's ban on firearms research created at the bidding of the National Rifle Association has now been lifted by the Obama administration. Education is being conducted every day in communities across the country by local leaders, activists, and organizations who are outraged by the tragedies of Sandy Hook, Conn., Aurora, Colo., Sanford, Fla., and the gunshot victims in their own neighborhoods. Personal commitment is rising as Americans begin to realize that, for the foreseeable future, overcoming gun violence will require stamina and patience and an unwavering determination *not* to become like their opponents.

Negotiation had been relegated to counting the votes of hostile lawmakers who are afraid of the Second Amendment argument, but recently this step has taken on new meaning as more and more elected officials decry gun violence and more and more citizens express outrage and demand workable solutions. Direct action has come in the forms of demonstrations, voter registration and education, rallies, and boycotts.

And finally we arrive at that last, most difficult step — reconciling our differences, bridging the misunderstandings, standing for justice and safety for all. We are called on to demonstrate the moral authority of activists such as King, Nelson Mandela, and others whose undeserved suffering forged a steely and absolute refusal to become like the oppressors. To refuse the easy satisfaction of revenge. To work for the long-term reduction of fear.

*Alice Johnson is the executive director of Georgians for Gun Safety.*

## Keeping the faith in civil rights

**'To be a Christian is to be engaged in justice issues.'**

BY REV. DR. WILLIAM J. BARBER, II

**M**y father, Rev. William Joseph Barber Sr., first set the example for me. Both a minister and a tireless activist who helped to integrate North Carolina's public schools, he showed me that to be a Christian is to be engaged in justice issues. The interconnectedness of faith and civil rights is further reinforced in two critical passages of Scripture: Isaiah 58, which commands us to cry out loudly against injustice; and Luke 4, in which Jesus' first sermon outlines five priority groups of people to serve — the poor, the sick, the blind, the captive, and anyone who's been ostracized by society. I cannot separate my concern for civil rights from my Christianity.

It is this deep moral center that guides North Carolina's Forward Together Movement, in which thousands of determined people gather for Moral Monday at the North Carolina General Assembly every week to protest the extreme, immoral policies of Gov. Pat McCrory and the leadership in our legislature. We are led by a moral calling to speak out against policies that reject federal aid to extend Medicaid to 500,000 poor and uninsured North Carolina families; end the Earned Income Tax Credit for more than 900,000 low-income working families; and cut off 70,000 laid-off workers from critical unemployment benefits. As Isaiah 10:1 says: "Woe unto those that legislate evil and pass laws that rob the poor of their right."

Progressive friends sometimes dismiss having a moral center as something for the far right, and occasionally question why I bring my faith to the work of social activism. I tell them that when you try to have a political conversation without the moral context, you're not only giving away ground that we should never dispense of — you're also contradicting history.

Every movement in America that has made a significant impact has had a deep moral framework. The fight against slavery had a moral center. The fight for labor rights had a deep moral center. In the fight for women's suffrage, one of its leaders, Sojourner Truth, emphasized herself to be in God when she said in her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?": "Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him." All of these movements drew on the interconnected tenets of faith, righteousness, and justice.

After Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a man of God with the principles of morality and justice squarely on his side, the conservative right decided never again to allow a person to get that kind of play and articulation. It worked deliberately to redefine moral issues. It no longer wanted the debate be focused on economic justice, housing, and health care. Instead the conservative right pushed abortion, prayer in schools, and being anti-gay as the new focus for politicians of faith. From television preachers to lawmakers across the country, these became the only "faith-based" issues that were discussed. That's why so many Americans, to this day, associate morality and faith with those matters, while treating civil rights as a secular affair. We can't let this bait-and-switch win.

In North Carolina, the governor and the legislature are similarly trying to convince people that their policies reflect faith-based values, with their attacks on women's reproductive rights and attempts to eliminate early voting on Sundays. But it is the thousands of North Carolinians who demonstrate against them every Monday — including hundreds of ministers, priests, and rabbis — that truly reflect people of conscience. They share my belief that women's rights, civil rights, and the quest for policies that reduce poverty are moral issues as well.

We call it Moral Mondays because we believe that the civil rights community must always work within a deep moral framework. The other side has misused and abused "morality" for too long.

Starting here and now, we boldly take it back.

*Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, is president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP and its more than 100 branches and college chapters. Barber is also a member of the National NAACP Board of Directors, chair of its Political Action and Legislative Committee, Convener of the Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Coalition, made up of 147 organizations, and pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, N.C.*

## The media and protest

**'If there is a government agent electronically peering over your shoulder ... will you step up and challenge authority?'**

BY AMY GOODMAN AND DENIS MOYNIHAN

**T**he vast government spy program overseen by President Barack Obama, ostensibly to protect "national security," may well destroy investigative journalism, as well as the spirit and practice of nonviolent dissent, two foundational aspects of our society.

The first major protest organized with the help of the Internet was against the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in late 1999. The protesters represented many interests, nationalities, and sectors, and shut down the meeting that many believed threatened a massive advance of corporate globalization.

"Teamsters and Turtles" became the protest's catchphrase, reflecting the unusually broad coalition in the streets, with unionized workers and environmentalists in sea turtle costumes joining forces, protesting nonviolently. The authorities were caught off guard. Amid what many rightly characterized as a massive police riot, with tens of thousands of rubber-coated steel bullets fired, canisters of **See The Future of Nonviolence p.30**



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tear gas released, endless streams of pepper spray unleashed point-blank into protestors' faces, and to the staccato explosions of flash-bang grenades, then-President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and thousands of officials from around the globe were trapped in their hotels. The meetings collapsed in total failure.

That same week, the *New Yorker* magazine published the article "The Intelligence Gap: How the digital age left our spies out in the cold" by Pulitzer Prize-winner Seymour Hersh. Hersh wrote, "The National Security Agency, whose Cold War research into code breaking and electronic eavesdropping spurred the American computer revolution, has become a victim of the high-tech world it helped to create ... [failing] to prepare fully for today's high-volume flow of E-mail and fibre-optic transmissions."

Hersh's piece was, at the time, one of the few detailed journalistic exposés on the NSA (the other being the groundbreaking 1982 book by James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace*, since updated). By late 1999, the democratizing power of the Internet was empowering people at the grassroots level. It allowed people to communicate instantly across the globe at almost no cost, and widely available encryption technology allowed such communication free from government snooping. Government eavesdroppers couldn't keep pace with the new wave of democratic communication.

Close to a decade and a half later, it seems the NSA has caught up. As the leaks from whistle-blower Edward Snowden have demonstrated, the United States government's spy apparatus apparently knows no bounds. It seems all electronic communications within the U.S., to and from the U.S. abroad, and those within countries around the world, are being vacuumed up and processed by an ever-expanding web of city-size data processing centers.

How will contemporary protest organizers manage under this regime of constant and universal surveillance? What effect will it have on the willingness of individuals to voice dissent?

On March 8, 1971, documents were stolen from the small FBI office in the Philadelphia suburb of Media, Penn. These documents, leaked to newspapers such as the *New York Times*, as well as to members of Congress, exposed the FBI's COINTELPRO program, which targeted antiwar activists, civil rights groups, and others with surveillance, infiltration, and disruption, including attempts to provoke violence within groups. One of the documents revealed an FBI policy to increase the frequency of interviews with dissenters, as such FBI scrutiny, the memo noted, "will enhance the paranoia endemic in these circles and will further serve to get the point across

there is an FBI agent behind every mailbox."

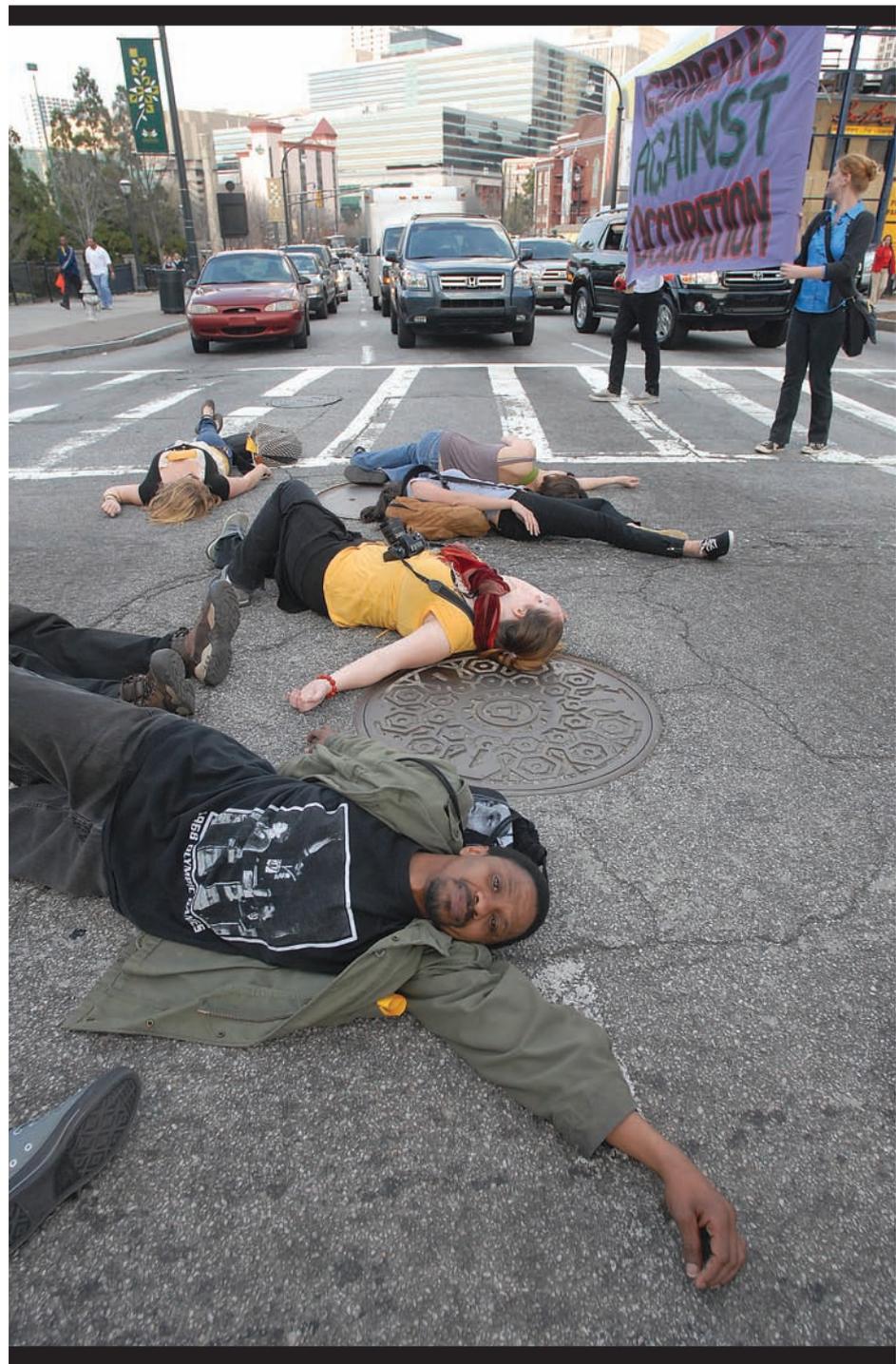
Forty years later, switch "mailbox" with "email inbox." The Obama administration's spy program is without precedent in history, judging by the documents released so far by Snowden. Effective organizing like that in the "Battle in Seattle" in 1999 could well be impossible, or at least far more difficult, with the incredible (and very likely unconstitutional) reach of the surveillance. Emails, phone calls, GPS tracking of our movements, metadata of all sorts, can be collected and analyzed. Individuals with vulnerabilities can be identified (On parole? Hiding an affair? Cooperate and your secrets will remain secret.), then targeted for intimidation or recruitment by agencies like the FBI, to infiltrate, disrupt, or spy on constitutionally protected groups. What effect will dissent against corporations and governments have, when efforts to organize dissent can be disrupted at their inception?

Obama's spy programs will have an especially pernicious impact on investigative journalism. Alternative media like "Democracy Now!" and *Creative Loafing* are the very outlets most likely to report on dissent, on social movements. There is a reason "Democracy Now!" was on the ground at the Seattle WTO protest — because we follow social movements, we receive, and take seriously, press releases from protest organizers. We were covering Occupy Wall Street before the first protests even began. Now, we learn, constitutional privacy protections are virtually nonexistent. Journalists are being forced under court order to reveal sources.

Will organizers feel safe communicating with the press in the future? Will we be able to develop sources in dissenting groups? More importantly, perhaps, will people be frightened away from dissenting to begin with? If there is a government agent electronically peering over your shoulder while you read about a protest on your laptop, or if an automated surveillance program is sifting through your emails, will you step up and challenge authority? Or will you quiet down and get in line, and mind your business like a good citizen?

In 1775, Ben Franklin wrote, "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." Twelve years later, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." These founders could not have predicted the immense powers of privacy invasion now wielded by the former constitutional law professor occupying the White House.

One of the great journalists of the 20th century, I.F. Stone, famously said, "Govern-



JOEFF DAVIS

ments lie." This is true, here in the U.S., now more than ever. The Orwellian surveillance state being built and defended by Obama is the most significant threat to our democracy today. A Congressional effort to shut down the worst of the NSA spying narrowly failed in the House of Representatives, with an unusual but potent coalition between Republican libertarians, led by Justin Amash, and progressive Democrats, led by John Conyers, both of Michigan. A flurry of lawsuits from groups including the ACLU and the

Electronic Freedom Foundation seek to accomplish the same goal. Social movements are growing to confront and reverse the spying as well. Our job in the media is to report on these movements, to expose government and corporate lies, and to do so fairly, without fear or favor. 

NEWS@CREATIVELOAFING.COM

Amy Goodman is host of the independent news program "Democracy Now!." Denis Moynihan is special projects coordinator for "Democracy Now!."