

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Interfaith Youth Service

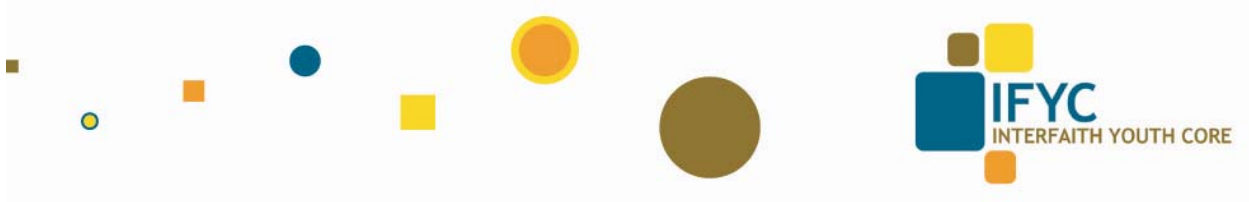
Building Rev. Dr. King's "World House" Facilitator's Guide



Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: "A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together." This is the great new problem of mankind [sic]. We have inherited a large house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem [sic] and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

**From "The World House" in Where Do We Go from Here:
Chaos or Community? (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p.167.**



Goals for the Dialogue

- To help participants discover the *shared value* of *[enter your shared value here (e.g. service, care for the environment, hospitality, etc.)]* across different religious and philosophical traditions using *text-study, storytelling,* and *action.*
- To help participants make a *connection* between their own religious or philosophical tradition and *[enter your shared value here]*
- To help participants learn how to *talk about what they believe* while also learning to *listen to others*
- To increase participants' awareness of Rev. Dr. King as an *interfaith leader* by learning about his *relationships with leaders of other faiths*
- To build a sense of *cooperation* and *collaboration* amongst young people from diverse religious and philosophical backgrounds

Introduction: Setting a Safe Space for Dialogue

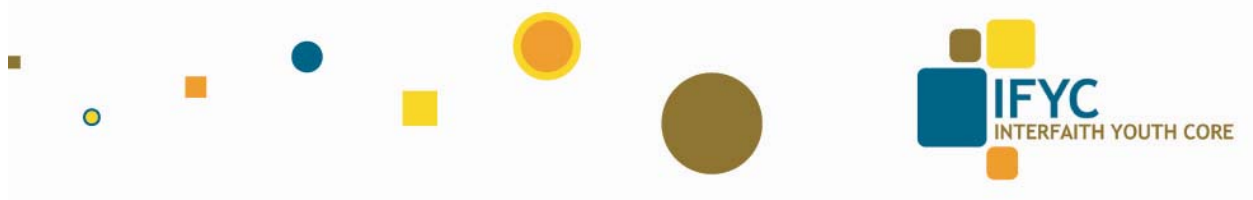
It is important, before all else, to intentionally set a “safe space” for dialogue, a space where people from all backgrounds can feel comfortable sharing personal parts of who they are with others. Safe space exists when several people come together and agree to have interactions in which identity is respected, their experiences will be genuinely listened to by others, and people are collaboratively committed to serving the common good. Even though safe space is built over time, there are some things you can do to set the correct tone right off the bat.

Make sure everyone has gotten a chance to introduce herself or himself

Rather than go around in a circle, play an icebreaker game or think of some other creative way to start pushing people out of their defensive postures.

Introduce the kind of interactions you will be having

Tell the participants, “*You will be asked to talk about and act on your values today with others who don’t necessarily share your beliefs and ways of life.*”



Introduce the concept of “safe space” and brainstorm guidelines for maintaining it.

Introduce and explain the concept of safe space to the participants and then ask them, *“What do you need from yourself and others in order to feel safe having these kinds of interactions? What are some suggested guidelines that might help us maintain safe space?”*

Take notes on your group’s responses and then read the responses aloud to conclude the discussion. If possible, write them on a large piece of paper or overhead projector so that everyone can read them.

- If you notice that members of the group are providing general terms for guidelines, ask them to specify what they mean. For example, if a person offers “respect” as a guideline, ask them: *“What does ‘respect’ mean for you in the context of this conversation?”* The goal of this brainstorming activity is that the participants end with a list of specific guidelines that have an actual bearing on how they converse and interact.
- Here is a list of sample safe space guidelines. If your group is having a hard time coming up with ideas, suggest 1 or 2 of these to get them thinking in the right direction:
 - *Active listening at all times*
 - *Remember the importance of the other person’s religious or philosophical tradition in his or her own life*
 - *Assume others have no knowledge about your own tradition and take the time to explain everything*
 - *Seek clarification if you don’t understand something someone else is saying*
 - *Everything said should remain in the room*
 - *Suspend your judgment*
 - *Every question is encouraged*
 - *Everyone has the right to pass*

Ask everyone to commit to these guidelines

The guidelines should be ones with which the entire group feels comfortable abiding. Tell participants to take a moment and think about with which guidelines they anticipate having the most trouble. Then ask everyone in the group to commit to abiding by the guidelines for the duration of your time together. If possible, leave them where everyone can see them and refer back to them if you feel someone is disrupting the safe space.



Part 1: Texts on the Shared Value of **[enter your shared value here]**

The goal of this portion of the dialogue is to help make explicit one of the goals of the dialogue – that even though our traditions have different ways of talking about **[enter your shared value here]**, each deeply values the work that we have done today. Explain to the group that these texts give us the opportunity to think about how we interact with people of different religious or philosophical traditions. They give us examples of shared values that frame our interactions and discussions in a more positive light.

Pass out copies of the Texts on the Shared Value of *[enter your shared value here]* (“Texts on the Shared Value of Service” are found at the end of this curriculum, but we encourage you to identify and assemble texts on the shared value that your project is focusing on)

Tell the group, *“Now we’re going to listen to some of the ways that different religious and philosophical traditions understand **[enter your shared value here]**.”*

Go around the circle and ask each participant to read one text passage aloud

Be sure that participants know they can pass if they feel uncomfortable reading the texts.

See if there are any clarifying questions about the texts

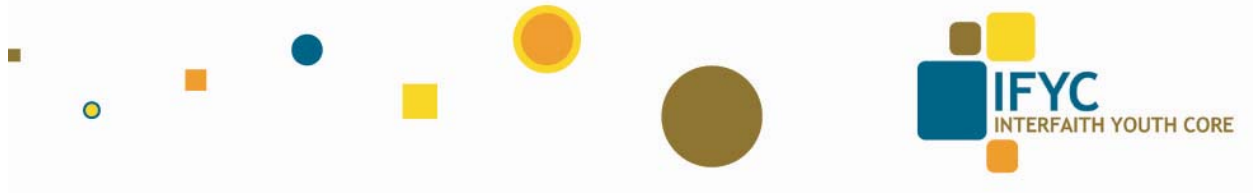
Ask the group: *“Do you have any questions about these texts?”* If someone has a question, make sure you always defer to the other participants to answer first (especially if it is a question about a tradition that is not your own). If no one can answer, go ahead if you feel comfortable, but also suggest that it makes sense to seek out someone from that tradition who might be able to answer the question.

Discuss the texts with the group by asking

- *Did any of these texts particularly resonate with you? Why?*
- *Was the text that did resonate with you from your own religious or philosophical tradition? If not, were you surprised that you found another religious or philosophical tradition’s text compelling?*
- *Did you hear anything from the texts that you found particularly challenging? Why were they challenging for you?*
- *Did you hear anything from the texts today that made you think about **[enter your shared value here]** differently or in a new way?*

Part 2: Dialogue through Sharing Stories

Sharing stories from our own experience is a powerful way to affirm our unique identity while building community with those who hear our stories. An exchange of ideas, experience, and trust occurs each time we tell or hear a story. For this reason, the next portion of the dialogue will consist of storytelling and will build upon the previous conversation on the shared value of **[enter your shared value here]**.



How do you benefit from [enter your shared value here]?

Explain to your group, *"We've just spent the last couple hours [enter your service project here], and by extension, serving this community and this city. Most of the time, however, we are recipients of [enter your shared value here]. Tell a story about a time when you or your community benefited from [enter your shared value here]."*

How does your tradition value [enter your shared value here]?

Ask the group to brainstorm: *"How do you relate to [enter your shared value here] in your faith tradition, family, or community?"* Try to get them to list things: *"Our scriptures talk about [enter your shared value here],"* or *"My family engages in [enter your shared value here] a lot,"* etc.

Now push the question further, *"Can you tell stories of specific instances when your community valued [enter your shared value here]? A story from your faith tradition that shows the importance of [enter your shared value here] to that tradition?"*

Part 3: Returning to the Texts

Return to the pages with the selections of text. Ask the group to read the texts aloud one more time.

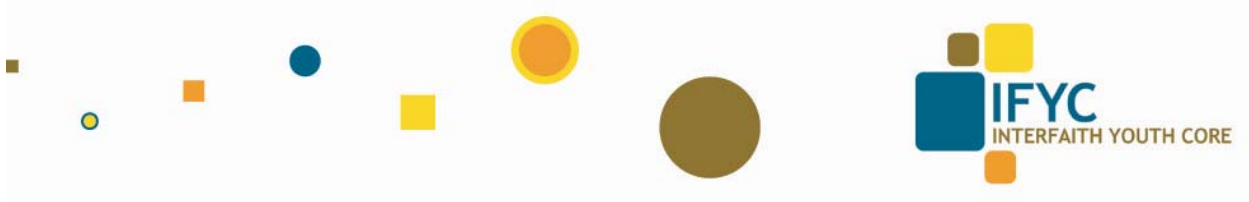
Ask and discuss the following questions

- *During this second reading, did you have any new insights based on the stories we just shared with one another?*
- *Did you see the themes of these texts in the stories we just shared?*
- *Do you see the source of your understanding of [enter your shared value here] in any of these texts? Which one or ones?*

Part 4: Rev. Dr. King's House

After concluding the conversation about the shared value of [enter your shared value here], the next portion of the dialogue seeks to help the participants learn about Rev. Dr. King's legacy as an interfaith leader by exploring his image of the "World House."

Pass out copies of Rev. Dr. King's description of the "World House" (found at the end of this curriculum)



Ask the participants to read the passage in silence

Ask and discuss the following questions:

- *Are many different kinds of people who live in your community?*
- *How do they get along with each other?*
- *Do you agree with Rev. Dr. King that we “must learn somehow to live in peace” with people who are different from us?*
- *Rev. Dr. King does not explain how to build the World House in this quote. What stories from his life do you know of how he tried to build the World House?*

Part 5: Rev. Dr. King’s Interfaith Relationships

The next portion of the dialogue seeks to help the participants learn about Rev. Dr. King’s legacy as an interfaith leader through his relationships with leaders of other faiths. Explain to the group that just as we have come together today from different backgrounds around the shared value of **[enter your shared value here]**, so did Martin Luther King collaborate with people from other backgrounds around the shared value of racial reconciliation.

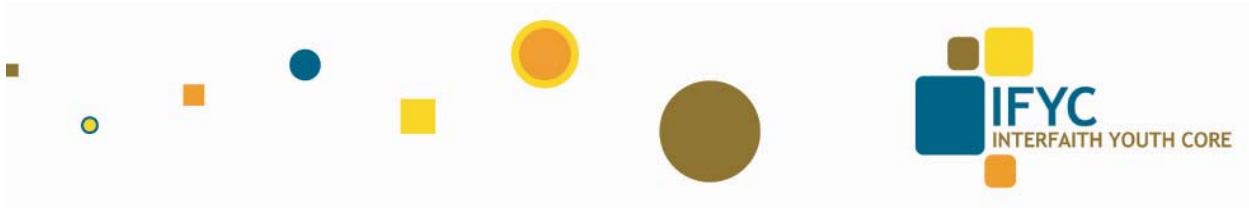
Pass out copies of the MLK’s Interfaith Partnerships (found at the end of this curriculum)

Go around the circle and ask each participant to read one bio and quotation aloud

Be sure that participants know they can pass if they feel uncomfortable reading the texts.

Ask and discuss the following questions:

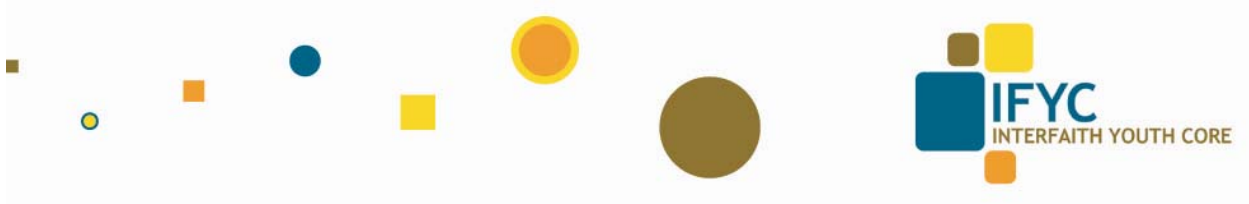
- *What do these four religious leaders have in common?*
- *Why do you think they were willing to work together even though they belonged to different communities?*
- *How do you think it strengthened the Civil Rights Movement to have the participation of all these communities and others?*
- *Do you see an image of Rev. Dr. King’s World House in the Civil Rights Movement?*



Conclusion: Building the World House Today

Ask and discuss the following questions

- *How did our project today reflect the interfaith partnerships Rev. Dr. King built in the Civil Rights Movement?*
- *How will you take the experiences you had today back with you to your community?*
- *How can you continue the relationships you built today in the future?*



Texts on the Shared Value of Service

Baha'i Tradition on Service (Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha)

One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close.

Buddhist Tradition of Service (from Itivuttaka 18)

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it.

Christian Tradition of Service (Matthew 25:35)

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Hindu Tradition of Service (from Bhagavad Gita 3.10)

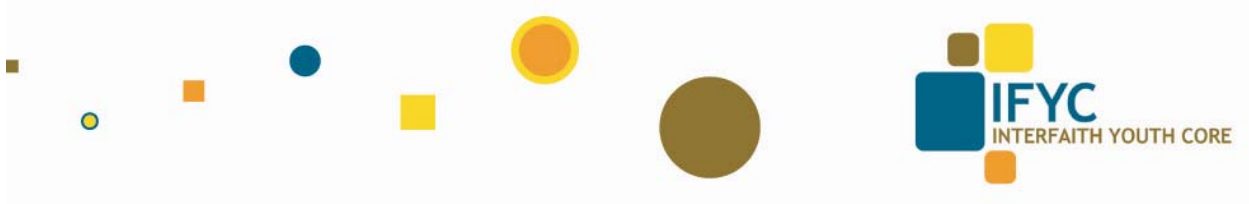
At the beginning, mankind and the obligation of selfless service were created together. "Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find the fulfillment of your desires": this is the promise of the Creator....

Jain Tradition of Service (from Tattvarthasutra 5.21)

Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings.

Jewish Tradition of Service (Deuteronomy 10:17)

For the LORD your G-d is G-d supreme and Lord supreme, the great, the mighty, and the awesome G-d, who shows no favor and takes no bribe, but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the



stranger, providing him with food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Muslim Tradition of Service (Surah 93:1-11)

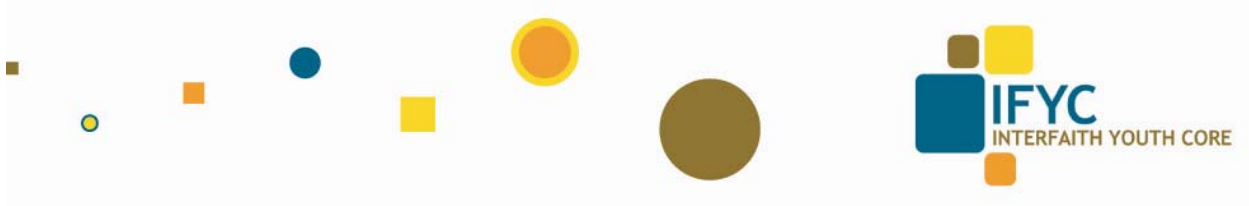
I call to witness the early hours of morning, and the night when dark and still, your Lord has neither left you, nor despises you. What is to come is better for you than what has gone before; for your Lord will certainly give you, and you will be content. Did He not find you an orphan and take care of you? Did He not find you perplexed, and show you the way? Did He not find you poor and enrich you? So do not oppress the orphan, and do not drive the beggar away, and keep recounting the favors of your Lord.

Secular Humanist Tradition of Service (from the writings of Pablo Neruda)

To feel the intimacy of brothers is a marvelous thing in life. To feel the love of people whom we love is a fire that feeds our life. But to feel the affection that comes from those whom we do not know, from those unknown to us, who are watching over our sleep and solitude, over our dangers and our weaknesses – that is something still greater and more beautiful because it widens out the boundaries of our being and unites all living things.

Sikh Tradition of Service (from Guru Granth Sahib)

The individual who performs selfless service without thought of reward shall attain God's salvation.



Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Description of the "World House"

Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: "A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together." This is the great new problem of mankind [sic]. We have inherited a large house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together - black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem [sic] and Hindu - a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.

From "The World House" in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p.167.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Interfaith Partnerships

The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.



Today, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is known most widely as the Baptist Minister whose faith journey inspired the U.S. Civil Rights movement. His deeply held belief that all people are created in God's image inspired Dr. King to embrace the wonderful diversity of religious beliefs and to struggle non-violently for social justice around the world. His heartfelt conviction that God called on all people of faith to confront social injustice encouraged Dr. King to reach out to all communities of faith in creating a Beloved Community of shared values, mutual understanding, and positive social action.

We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now ... We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." ... We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation.

Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi

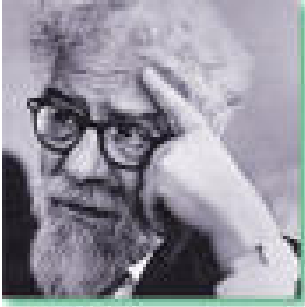


Mohandas Gandhi was a Hindu whose concept of *satyagraha*, or love force, helped India gain its independence from British colonial rule in 1947. Although the British authorities repeatedly jailed Gandhi and his followers, his calm commitment to loving his enemies while resisting them nonviolently never wavered.

Rev. Dr. King was inspired by Gandhi's non-violent methods and brought them to the United States Civil Rights Movement. After Gandhi's death, Rev. King traveled to India to study Gandhi's life's work with those who had worked with and known him personally.

Non-violent resistance implies the very opposite of weakness. Defiance combined with non-retaliatory acceptance of repression from one's opponents is active, not passive. It requires strength, and there is nothing automatic or intuitive about the resoluteness required for using non-violent methods in political struggle and the quest for Truth.

Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Jewish theologian and leader of the Conservative Movement sought to transform the United States through the concept of *Tikkun Olam*, or “healing the world.” Born in Poland, Heschel studied theology in Germany but eventually fled to the United States when the Nazis came to power. The Holocaust, which eventually killed six million Jews, convinced Heschel that the leaders of all faith communities must expose social injustice. He also believed that God called on all people of faith to work together in confronting and defeating social injustice.

After Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel saw the legacy of the ancient prophets of Israel reflected in King’s work, Heschel invited King to speak at a conference on Religion and Race sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Chicago in 1963. Heschel later joined Dr. King in the march from Selma to Montgomery during one of the most critical points in the Civil Rights Movement.

The way we act, the way we fail to act is a disgrace that must not go on forever. This is not a white man’s world. This is not a colored man’s world. It is God’s world ... We have failed to use the avenues open to us to educate the hearts and minds of men, to identify ourselves with those who are underprivileged ... Repentance means a new insight, a new spirit. It also means a course of action.

Thien Su Thich Nhat Hanh



In Southeast Asia the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, was using the principles of compassion and nonviolence to stop the war in Vietnam. Hanh believed that people of faith, especially youth, could not remain silent in the face of social injustice. They must work together to heal the world. He founded the School of Youth for Social Services in Saigon, a grassroots relief organization that rebuilt bombed villages, set up schools and medical centers, resettled homeless families, and organized agricultural cooperatives.

Rev. Dr. King built a relationship with Thich Nhat Hanh and his struggle against the war in Vietnam. In 1967, King nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come to speak for them.