



Dr. Mary Elizabeth King

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India-2003

Born: 30th July, 1940

B.A. - Ohio Wesleyan University, USA M.B.A. - Loyola University, USA

Ph.D. - University of Wales at Aberystwyth, UK

Professor Mary King is a prize-winning author, political scientist, and a well known civil rights leader in the USA. As a student, she was one of the few white participants in the U.S. civil rights movement, where she worked alongside the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (no relation), in the crusade for racial justice. She won a 1988 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Book Award for her book "Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement" (1987), an account of her four years working in the civil rights movement. This highly acclaimed book chronicles her experiences toiling for Martin Luther King's strategy of non-violent non-cooperation. The four years that she spent at the vortex of the civil rights movement mark the start of a life-long study of Gandhian values and non-violent strategic action in political conflicts.

Mary King is now Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University for Peace of the UN, whose main campus is in Costa Rica, and also serves as Special Advisor to the Rector. At UPEACE, she teaches non-violent transformation of conflict, international peace studies, gender and peace building, and is an academic advisor to the university's Africa Programme. She is also Distinguished Scholar at the American University Center for Global Peace, in Washington, D.C. For the year 2004, she will additionally be a Visiting Research Fellow at the Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, England. Dr. King was previously Professor of International Politics at St. George's University, Grenada, West Indies, where, among her teaching responsibilities, were courses on non-violent struggle and building peace.

Professor King's work has taken her to more than 120 countries over the past two decades. During the Carter Administration, as a Presidential appointee confirmed by the U.S. Senate, she had world-wide responsibility for the Peace Corps (then in 60 countries), VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and other national volunteer service programmes.

Having worked with former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn for more than thirty years, Professor King has since 1984 participated in some of his peace-building efforts and served as his special adviser on the Middle East. In this capacity, she has acted as President Carter's envoy to business and political leaders of the region.

In 1999, UNESCO published Mary King's latest book "Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Power of Non-violent Action". This book was re-published in New Delhi, in 2002, by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Mehta Publishers. This internationally-recognised volume covers a panorama of nine contemporary non-violent struggles of the 20th century around the world that were shaped and informed by Gandhian theories and methods, and which often brought about significant social and political reforms for justice and human rights. Professor B.R. Nanda, the famous author and biographer of Gandhi, has noted that Gandhi and his nonviolence were new subjects for Dr. King's pen as an author, but, pursued with great tenacity and enthusiasm, had become (as it often happens with those who study Gandhi) not merely an intellectual but an emotional experience, which remoulds one's attitude to life. The sweep of nonviolent movements, which Mary King records, testifies to the potential for non-violent direct action as an effective political strategy in almost any country or any century, and one with growing relevance as an alternative to military interventions and approaches based on violence. President Jimmy Carter has acclaimed the book as UNESCO's superb gift to the twenty-first century and the pursuit of human rights, freedom, and justice.

Mary King's leadership has extended to a number of boards of directors of private voluntary agencies and non-governmental organisations concerned with international development, peace, and conflict resolution.

Professor King speaks publicly on issues of nonviolent resolution of conflict in numerous forums. She has, for example, addressed the Hubert F. Humphrey Fellows, who come from all over the world. In 1997, C-Span televised nationally in the United States her one-and-a-half hour lecture, "Martin Luther King's 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail,' and its Enduring Impact around the World," on 29 August.

Professor King has throughout her adult life been an advocate for the empowerment of women as agents for social change. In April 1966, "Liberation" Magazine of the War Resisters League published "Sex and Caste," co-authored with Casey Hayden - one of the generative documents of the modern women's movement and gender studies - a manifesto that had arisen from discussions among women staff in the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), the civil rights organisation with which she worked for four years in the states of Georgia and Mississippi. Her efforts for the advancement of women were crystallised when she chaired the Committee of 51.3% during the 1976 Carter Presidential Campaign, a policy and strategy arm of the campaign that sought to increase the participation of women in the American political system.

