Unit Two: Peacemakers and Nonviolence
Lesson 3: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Standards Addressed by Lesson: **CIVICS** Standard 4.3 Students know how citizens can exercise their rights. (d) Describing and evaluating historical or current examples of citizen movements to ensure rights of all citizens. Standard 4.4 Students know how citizens can participate in civic life. (a -d) **HISTORY** Standard 5.1 Students understand how democratic ideas and institutions in the United States have developed, changed, and/or been maintained. (c, d) Standard 5.3 Students know how political power has been acquired, maintained, used and/or lost throughout history. (e) Standard 6.2 Students know how societies have been affected by religions and philosophies. (a)

Objectives of Lesson: To introduce and discuss Martin Luther King, Jr.

Instructional Strategies: Reading, writing activity, discussion

Vocabulary: None

Suggested Time: Between 50 and 60 minutes

Materials Needed: Copies of articles (from *Solutions to Violence*)

Attachments:

A. MLK Biography. Found at: http://www.africawithin.com/mlking/king_bio1.htm

B. Articles "Loving Your Enemies" and "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" by Martin Luther King, Jr (Colman McCarthy, ed., *Solutions to Violence*, Center for Teaching Peace)

Lesson Outline

Introduction to Lesson:
This lesson focuses on another peacemaker, Martin Luther King and some of his thoughts on personal violence. Lesson begins with a reading, class will then have time to do personal writing in response to some related questions, then it will be opened up to discussion.

Icebreaker / or Quick Activity to Assess Prior Learning:
Begin by asking what students already know about Martin Luther King.

See attached MLK fact sheet for important points students should be familiar with.

Activities

Activity 1: Group Reading

Read "Loving Your Enemies" by Martin Luther King, Jr. Pass out enough copies for the group, and have the group read the article together. Pick one student to read the first paragraph then go around in a circle, having each student read one paragraph. Although the main discussion should be reserved for the overhead questions, it might be a good idea to allow for some comments to be shared. Found in: *Solutions to Violence*, Colman McCarthy ed. Center for Teaching Peace. Found at: http://www.salsa.net/peace/conv/index.html

Discussion Questions:

1. What from the reading stood out for you?
2. What were the ideas that you agreed with or disagreed with? Why?

Activity 2: Questions for Journaling

Place the following questions on the board, overhead, or newsprint so that everyone can see them. Read the questions to the class and make sure they are clear. Give the class 15 minutes to journal their response to any one of the questions. Make sure students know this writing is more for their own personal reflections, and they will be free to share whatever they are comfortable with.

1. Do you agree with Martin Luther King Jr.'s concept of "loving your enemies?"

2. Have you ever experienced truly forgiving someone or being forgiven? Can you reflect on the challenges? Explain how you felt after this experience? What relationship, if any, do the two actions have with each other?

3. "... We must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is.... We recognize that his hate grows out of fear, pride, ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding..." What does this mean to you?

4. After reading King's sermon, why do you think we should love our enemies, and what does it mean to love our enemies? Why is this so difficult?

After the group has completed journaling, open it up for discussion. Ask if anyone has anything they want to share. If people are reserved about sharing personal reflections, the facilitator can start by sharing his or her reflection.

Activity 3: Group Reading

Read "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" by Martin Luther King, Jr. Found in: *Solutions to Violence*, Colman McCarthy ed. Center for Teaching Peace. Found at: http://www.salsa.net/peace/conv/index.html

Discussion Questions:

1. The MLK we learn about in school is related to his work on civil rights; however his efforts to speak out against poverty and the war are not something we learn about. Why do we only know him for his efforts towards improving civil rights?

3. Can you explain what MLK meant when he said, "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death"?

Helpful Hints / Comments from Previous Facilitators:

This lesson brought the issue of violence to a personal level so there was more depth to the discussion as well as more people participating.

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Attachment A: MLK BIOGRAPHY

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929. He was the oldest son of the Reverend and Mrs. Martin Luther King. He was named Michael Luther after his father, but later the Reverend King changed both their names to Martin Luther in honor of the great church leader.

Unhappily racial experiences made a deep and lasting impression on young Martin. One day his father took him to buy new shoes. When they sat down in the store, the clerk asked them to move to the back of the store. Dr. King took Martin by the hand and left the store rather than take that kind of treatment. Another time, the parents of boys Martin played with told him that they could no longer come out to play with him because they were white and he was black. Martin's feelings were hurt. His mother tried to explain about prejudice. She told him that blacks were no longer slaves, but they were not really free.

Martin liked sports. He played baseball, basketball and wrestling. But he especially liked reading. He liked reading about famous people in black history. He found out what it took for them to overcome difficulties and become successful. He liked to learn new words and use them.

He was fascinated by watching his father, Martin Luther King, Sr., Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, and other ministers control audiences with skillfully chosen words. He longed to follow in their footsteps.

He made words central to his life--weapons of defense and offense. His mother said that she could not recall a time when he was not intrigued by the sound and power of words. He once told her, "I'm going to get me some big words like that." . When he got to high school, his ability to use words enabled him to win an oratorical contest.

In September 1944, when he was only 15 years old, King entered Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a black college, and his father and grandfather had gone there. He knew that his father would like him to become a minister, but at first Martin was not sure that was what he wanted to do. At first, he was undecided as to his course of study. However, his experiences at Morehouse shaped his direction for life. After meeting and talking with Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the college president, and Professor George Kelsey, head of the religion department, he made up his mind. King was enormously impressed. He saw in Mays what he wanted "a real minister to be"--a rational man whose sermons were both spiritually and intellectually stimulating, a moral man who was socially involved. Thanks largely to Mays, King realized that the ministry could be a respectable force for ideas, even for social protest. And so at seventeen King elected to become a Baptist minister, like his father and grandfather. At eighteen he was ordained a minister. The next year he graduated from Morehouse College with a degree in sociology.

Martin was an excellent student and was the class valedictorian when he graduated in 1951 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer. While at Crozer, King attended a lecture by Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, who was the president of Howard University in Washington, DC. Dr. Johnson "explained how Gandhi had forged Soul Force--the power of love or truth--into a mighty vehicle for social change." He "argued that the moral power of Gandhian nonviolence

could improve race relations in America, too." King was mesmerized by Gandhi's concepts, and began reading profusely about his life and philosophy.

In 1951, King graduated from Crozer as valedictorian. He also received the Peral Plafkner Award for scholarship, $1,200, and the Lewis Crozer Fellowship to continue his studies. While at Boston University, Martin met Coretta Scott. Coretta, a beautiful young lady from Marion, Alabama, a graduate of Antioch College in Ohio, was studying voice at the New England Conservatory of Music. She and Martin were married in June, 1953. His father performed the ceremony at her home in Alabama.

Coretta had grown up with segregation too. She shared Martin's dream of a time when everyone everywhere could enjoy equal rights. On June 5, 1955, when he had completed his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, the couple decided that they could make the greatest contribution by going back down South to work. Martin was installed by his father as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, in October of 1954. Just a little more that a year later, Yolanda, the first of the Kings' four children was born.

In December of 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. Mrs. Parks was later tried in Montgomery City Court, charged with and found guilty of violating a state law mandating segregation. She was fined $10. Her attorney appealed the conviction. Coincident with Mrs. Parks' trial a one-day boycott of the buses by many members of Montgomery's Black community, was planned. Dr. King was asked to help, as was his friend, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy. As a result of this, an organization was established, the "Montgomery Improvement Association," (MIA) to orchestrate a complete and ongoing response to Montgomery's segregation. Dr. King was chosen president. Blacks walked to work or took cars or taxis, but they did not ride the buses. The one-day boycott stretched out to 382 days. Finally, after more than a year of protest, on November 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was against the law.

Martin Luther King, Jr., knew that even though that battle against bus discrimination had been won in Montgomery, there was more that needed doing. As a result, on January 10-11, 1957, 60 Black leaders from 10 Southern states met at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta and founded the Southern Conference on Transportation and Non-violent Integration. Its original agenda concerned "segregation in transportation facilities and voter registration."

In February 1957, the organization elected Dr. King as President and changed its name to the Southern Leadership Conference (SLC), organized to fight "Jim Crow" laws that discrimination against blacks. Offices for the new group were in Atlanta, and the Kings moved there. Martin became assistant pastor at his father's church, the Ebenezer Baptist Church. He spent much time traveling. He spoke all over the country, urging nonviolent ways of gaining civil rights. He and Mrs. King visited Europe and Africa. They went to India to study Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent ways of fighting for freedom.

King spoke of how a Pilgrimage would be an appeal to the nation, and the Congress, to pass a civil rights bill that would give the Justice Department the power to file law suits against discriminatory registration and voting practices anywhere in the South. On August 28, 1963, at

least 250,000 people descended on Washington in the "largest single demonstration in movement history." Dr. King captured the day. Following the march, the organizers were invited to a reception at the White House, where President John F. Kennedy "was bubbling over the success of the event."

Perhaps the ultimate recognition of Dr. King's crusade to secure equal rights for all came on December 10, 1964, when, at age 35, he was the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1966, he and his family moved to Chicago. People in the slums of big cities had problems that were as serious as the discrimination they faced in the South. King planned a Poor People's March on Washington, D.C. Shortly before the march, Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee, where garbage workers were on strike for better working conditions. He led marchers through the streets in support of the strike. Violence broke out, and a young man was killed.

On April 4, King stood on the balcony of his hotel in Memphis, talking with men who had been with him in his many civil rights efforts....

Found at: http://www.africawithin.com/mlking/king_bio1.htm

See biographies by K.L.Smith and I.G. Zepp, Jr. (1974), and S. Oates (1982); C. S. King, *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1969); D. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* (1986); T. Branch, *Parting the Waters* (1988) and *Pillar of Fire* (1997).

Other important facts to point out to students:

- Civil-rights movement (1955-68) had its roots in a history of Black struggle for freedom, in egalitarian values found in the Declaration of Independence, in social justice and in the struggle of labor movements of the 1930s and 1940s.

- He wanted more than to end segregation but to move towards reconciliation with opponents to truly heal society, open up opportunities to all, and to be able to rebuild more inclusively.

- King was influenced by Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau.

- Although he initially refrained from criticizing the Vietnam War, in 1967 he began to speak out against the war, claiming it was another form of oppression.

- He became more radical in his challenging of the war in Vietnam, condemning it as a "moral tragedy" and as "draining the power and potential of Black America." He spoke out against the war as draining resources and diverting attention from the crisis of poverty happening at home.

- He was an inclusive peacemaker meaning:
    - He felt like White support was necessary for Blacks to improve their condition
    - It was important to include as many supporters as possible

Black nationalists = Stokely Carmichael was their primary spokesperson and leader. Black nationalists emphasized unity/improvement of living conditions, use of Black economic and political power, and separatism.

- King disagreed with Black Power because he felt that to transform and change society, both Blacks and Whites needed each other. His was a more nonviolent, integrationalist approach.

- In 1964 he started to write more about the economic inequalities.

- He planned the Poor People's Campaign in 1968 as a means to force the government to face the problem of poverty by bringing poor people to the capital.

Attachment B: Articles

Loving Your Enemies.

by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The following sermon was delivered at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, at Christmas, 1957. Martin Luther King wrote it whi1e in jail far committing nonviolent civil disobedience during the Montgomery bus boycott. Let us be practical and ask the question. How do we love our enemies?

First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one's enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us. It is also necessary to realize that the forgiving act must always be initiated by the person who has been wronged, the victim of some great hurt, the recipient of some tortuous injustice, the absorber of some terrible act of oppression. The wrongdoer may request forgiveness. He may come to himself, and, like the prodigal son, move up some dusty road, his heart palpitating with the desire for forgiveness. But only the injured neighbor, the loving father back home, can really pour out the warm waters of forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship. Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning. It is the lifting of a burden or the canceling of a debt. The words "I will forgive you, but I'll never forget what you've done" never explain the real nature of forgiveness. Certainly one can never forget, if that means erasing it totally from his mind. But when we forgive, we forget in the sense that the evil deed is no longer a mental block impeding a new relationship. Likewise, we can never say, "I will forgive you, but I won't have anything further to do with you." Forgiveness means reconciliation, a coming together again.

Without this, no man can love his enemies. The degree to which we are able to forgive determines the degree to which we are able to love our enemies.

Second, we must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is. An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy. Each of us has something of a schizophrenic personality, tragically divided against ourselves. A persistent civil war rages within all of our lives. Something within us causes us to lament with Ovid, the Latin poet, "I see and approve the better things, but follow worse," or to agree with Plato that human personality is like a charioteer having two headstrong horses, each wanting to go in a different direction, or to repeat with the Apostle Paul, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

This simply means that there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. When we look beneath the surface, beneath. the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of his acts are not quite representative of all that he is. We see him in a new light. We recognize that his hate grows out of fear, pride, ignorance, prejudice, and misunderstanding, but in spite of this, we know God's image is ineffably etched in being. Then we love our enemies by realizing that they are not totally bad and that they are not beyond the reach of God's redemptive love.

Third, we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy but to win his friendship and understanding. At times we are able to humiliate our worst enemy. Inevitably, his weak moments come and we are able to thrust in his side the spear of defeat. But this we must not do. Every word and deed must contribute to an understanding with the enemy and release those vast reservoirs of goodwill which have been blocked by impenetrable walls of hate.

Let us move now from the practical how to the theoretical why: Why should we love our enemies? The first reason is fairly obvious. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multi# plies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.

So when Jesus says "Love your enemies," he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition. Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies-or else? The chain reaction of evil-hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars-must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

Another reason why we must love our enemies is that hate scars the soul and distorts the personality. Mindful that hate is an evil and dangerous force, we too often think of what it does to the person hated. This is understandable, for hate brings irreparable damage to its victims. We have seen its ugly consequences in the ignominious deaths brought to six million Jews by hate-obsessed madman named Hitler, in the unspeakable violence inflicted upon Negroes by bloodthirsty mobs, in the dark horrors of war, and in the terrible indignities and injustices perpetrated against millions of God's children by unconscionable oppressors.

But there is another side which we must never overlook. Hate is just as injurious to the person who hates. Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a man's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false and the false with the true.

A third reason why we should love our enemies is that love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power.

The relevance of what I have said to the crisis in race relations should be readily apparent. There will be no permanent solution to the, race problem until oppressed men develop the capacity to love their enemies. The darkness of racial injustice will be dispelled only by the light of forgiving love. For more than three centuries American Negroes have been battered by the iron rod of oppression, frustrated by day and bewildered by night by unbearable injustice and burdened with the ugly weight of discrimination. Forced to live with these shameful conditions, we are tempted to become bitter and to retaliate with a corresponding hate. But if this happens, the new order we seek will be little more than a duplicate of the old order. We must in strength and humility meet hate with love.

My friends, we have followed the so-called practical way for too long a time now, and it has led inexorably to deeper confusion and chaos. Time is cluttered with the wreckage of communities which surrendered to hatred and violence. For the salvation of our nation and the salvation of mankind, we must follow another way.

While abhorring segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community.

To our most bitter opponents we say: "We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory."

*This reading is from **The Class of Nonviolence**, prepared by Colman McCarthy of the Center for Teaching Peace, 4501 Van Ness Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016 202/537-1372. Article found on:* http://www.salsa.net/peace/conv/index.html

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Declaration of Independence
from the War in Vietnam

By Martin Luther King, Jr.

An address at Riverside Church
New York City, Tuesday, April 4, 1967

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask. And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor-both black and white-through the Poverty Program. Then came the build-up in Vietnam, and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the young black men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor. I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today-my own government.

Somehow this madness must cease. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam and the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently, one of them wrote these words: "Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the hearts of the

Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism."

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. The need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and Green Beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. With such activity in mind, the words of John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. When machines and computers, profit and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triple ts of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered. The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling difference s is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from re-ordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons.

We must not engage in a negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take: offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wombs of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the lan d are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to ad just to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the

arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence - when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit form the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

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