

# Nobel

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all rolled into one,” says the historian Taylor Branch, author of the definitive trilogy “America in the King Years.”

“I don’t think he’s naïve,” Branch says. “I think he’s saying, if there’s hope, it’s through nonviolent cooperation and really applying it with courage and all your heart and your mind against the evils that still plague the world.”

Branch says that even though dozens of countries are at war today, levels of global violence and large-scale casualties have been declining since the mid-20th century. By that measure, there has been progress toward King’s dream of peace.

King used his Nobel lecture to expand on the connections between racism, poverty and war.

“Each of these problems,

which argues that humans have developed, biologically, a tendency to fight. Others argue that some income inequality is inevitable, since people have different capabilities.

Yet there is the question of degree. Clayborne Carson, a history professor and director of Stanford University’s Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, says King had focused on the triple threat of racism, poverty and war since the earliest parts of his career.

“You couldn’t solve one without solving the others,” Carson says in describing King’s view.

In that context, today’s struggle against enduring poverty and war may reflect a resistance to King’s holistic approach: We followed King’s lead to push back racism, but haven’t yet tried

national problems without war, because there are often no military solutions available today.

“In purely military terms, look at Russia. There is no military option for us, because they have nuclear weapons,” Chappell said. “With ISIS, you have people from Britain and Turkey and probably the United States who want to join ISIS. It’s an ideology. How do you deal with this prob-

lem in a conventional military way?” ISIS is another name for the terrorist group calling itself the Islamic State.

Observed King in his lecture: “Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem; it merely creates new and more complicated ones.”

“Violence ends up defeating itself,” he said.

These were King’s thoughts 50 years ago as he

sought to heal a nation fraught with centuries-old racial barriers and to safeguard a world with growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Today, as society continues to realize King’s racial dreams, perhaps there is still prophecy to be fulfilled in his Nobel talks.

“Is it possible that the road he and his people have charted may bring a ray of hope to other parts of the

world, a hope that conflicts between races, nations, and political systems can be solved, not by fire and sword, but in a spirit of true brotherly love?” Gunnar John, chairman of the Nobel committee, asked when giving King the peace prize.

“It sounds like a dream of a remote and unknown future,” he said, “but life is not worth living without a dream and without working to make the dream reality.”

‘Using nonviolence to achieve racial progress meant people have taken suffering upon themselves instead of inflicting it on others’

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

while appearing to be separate and isolated, is inextricably bound to the other,” he said.

“Using nonviolence to achieve racial progress, King said, meant people have taken suffering upon themselves instead of inflicting it on others. It has meant that we do not want to instill fear in others or into the society of which we are a part.”

That society is far bigger than America, King stated. It is the human family.

“We have inherited a big house, a great ‘world house’ in which in which we have to live together — black and white, Easterners and Westerners, Gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Moslem and Hindu, a family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interests who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn, somehow, in this one big world, to live with each other,” King lectured.

“This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men.”

Some say love has nothing to do with it. “War is embedded in our very nature,” the influential scholar Edward O. Wilson wrote in his book “The Social Conquest of Earth,”

to apply his methods of love and shared suffering to poverty and war.

“If the distribution of wealth in America was less unequal, we wouldn’t see as many of these manifestations of racial conflict,” Carson says.

The gap between the richest and poorest Americans has grown over the last 40 years, according to a February 2014 report by the liberal Economic Policy Institute. And the poverty rate, 15 percent in 2012, the most recent year available, hasn’t improved much since 1964, when it stood at 19 percent.

King said in Oslo: “It is obvious that if man is to redeem his spiritual and moral ‘lag,’ he must go all out to bridge the social and economic gulf between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ of the world. Poverty is one of the most urgent items on the agenda of modern life.”

Carson provided another example of King’s strategies being ignored: the idea that “if we just fight against these terrorists, terrorism will go away. One of the things King said is that the United States is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today. We don’t see that in ourselves, we (think we) use violence for good.”

Chappell, the soldier turned peacemaker, said King was ahead of his time in calling for solving inter-

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.



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