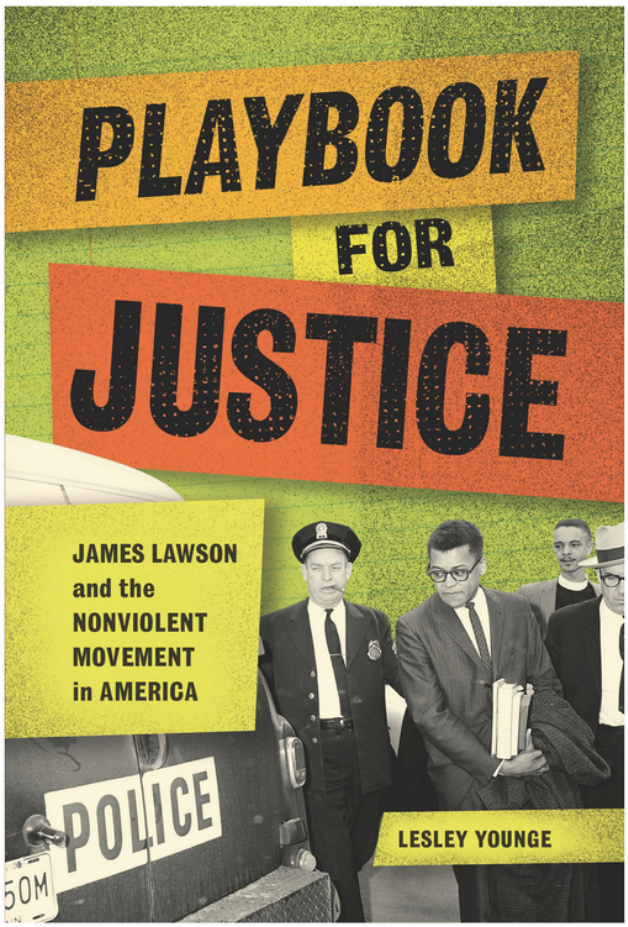


Educator Guide for *Playbook for Justice*

Created by Lesley Younge

Synopsis:

In the 1950s, Reverend James Lawson Jr. wanted to build a fairer world. After learning about Mohandas Gandhi's successful nonviolent resistance to injustice in India, he knew something similar could work in the United States as Black Americans fought to end racism and segregation. He trained other young civil rights activists, including John Lewis and Diane Nash, to become nonviolent "athletes" who refused to play by unfair rules. Strategic nonviolence became the cornerstone of the US Civil Rights Movement and led to many of its victories.

Playbook for Justice: James Lawson and The Nonviolent Movement In America weaves Lawson's biography into the story of nonviolence in the United States. It concludes with a young people's guide to becoming a nonviolent athlete today.

Lerner

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BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

Text Examination:

Take a look at the cover. What pictures, text, and design elements do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder?

Next, look through the glossary. What key words stand out? Which words are new to you? How are violence and nonviolence defined?

Next read the author note. Why did Lesley Younge write this book? What is her relationship to the work of James Lawson Jr.?

Journal Prompt:

Consider the word NONVIOLENCE. What does it mean to you? What images come to mind? Is the connotation positive, negative, or neutral? Explain your thinking.

Video Connection:

Watch this video from the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. Listen for these key quotes. Which confirms, challenges, or changes your thinking about nonviolence? Which makes you wonder and curious to learn more?

James Lawson - Gandhi and Nonviolence

"Nonviolence is an ancient wisdom."	"[Nonviolence] is always connected to strategies and blueprints for change in both your own life and in the life of your family and immediate community."	"I discovered that this was not powerlessness."
"[Nonviolence] transformed my thinking about myself and about life, but it also gave me a sense of strength. It made me courageous."	"The gift of life is a gift of power and the big issue is do we help shape our children, our babies to use that power destructively or to use that life power that they have from day one in ways that enlarge them, that give them a sense of freedom?"	"Philosophically, I like to say that nonviolence is the power of creation."

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TAKE A STAND SPECTRUM GROUP ACTIVITY
THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE

James Lawson, Martin Luther King Jr. and many other Civil Rights leaders believed in nonviolence as a philosophy, or way of thinking, not just a tactic or tool. They had a deep moral and often spiritual commitment. There were also Civil Rights leaders that did not believe in “principled nonviolence”. They were willing to use it as a strategy, as long as it worked. These differences created tension in the movement and were an important consideration for new activists. The Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence represent the main ideas of nonviolence and are still used by nonviolent organizations today.

Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence:

Principle One Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.	**Principle Two** Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.	**Principle Three** Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, or evil, not people.
Principle Four Nonviolence holds that unearned, voluntary suffering for a just cause can educate and transform people and societies.	**Principle Five** Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.	**Principle Six** Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

Source: https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy

Activity Directions

1. Identify a space in the room where participants can stand in a line. Designate one end “Strongly Agree” and the other “Strongly Disagree”.
2. Establish norms for respecting one another’s opinions and perspectives.
3. Read each of the Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence and ask participants to stand in a place that represents their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. The center might represent mixed feelings, confusion, or uncertainty.
4. Once lined up, ask participants to share their reasoning for standing in a particular place.
5. Discuss and debrief once all of the statements have been read. How did the activity confirm, challenge, or change their thinking about nonviolence?
6. This activity can also be done with post-it notes or a polling application.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS PARTS 1–3

Part 1: James Lawson's Call to Nonviolence

1. What major moments in Lawson's life led him to choose a life of nonviolence?

2. How did Lawson learn about nonviolence? Who were some of his teachers and mentors? How did he connect with them?

3. Why did Lawson choose to resist being drafted to the Korean War? What consequences did he experience? How did his experiences in prison reinforce his belief in nonviolence?

4. What did Lawson learn about nonviolence while he was in India? How was he influenced and inspired by Gandhi?

5. How did Lawson become involved in the Civil Rights Movement? What was his role?

6. Describe the Nashville students' process of preparing for their desegregation campaign. What steps did they take? How did they train?

7. What was at risk for students who participated in the desegregation demonstrations? Why were the students willing to take those risks?

8. How did the Civil Rights Movement against racism connect to other social justice efforts such as the anti-war and labor movements?

9. How did the Civil Rights Movement continue after Martin Luther King's death? How did it change?

10. How else was nonviolence used to achieve social justice goals in the late 20th century?

Part 2: Nonviolence as an American Ideal

1. Younge claims that nonviolence has played an important role in American history, yet we mostly think about and teach the story of the United States through the lens of violence and war. To what extent, do you agree or disagree with her? Explain your thinking.

2. Which of the key moments and people discussed in this section had you heard of before? Which were new to you? Do you know of any that were not included?

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3. How did different historical movements share nonviolent strategies and resources? What choices did they make that were unique to their cause, demographic, or situation?

4. Why are leaders of nonviolent movements considered dangerous? Why do their nonviolent actions often provoke a violent response?

5. Based on the cases discussed, what makes nonviolence effective in making historical change?

Part 3: Nonviolence and You

1. What evidence is provided that nonviolence is “a way of life for courageous people”? Do you agree or disagree?

2. What seems challenging about living a life that is philosophically rooted in nonviolence? What are some of the benefits?

3. Is violence ever justified when working for justice? Why or why not? Explain your thinking.

4. What skills are helpful to develop as a nonviolent activist?

5. What is an area of your life that might benefit from experimentation with nonviolence?

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PUTTING THE PLAYBOOK IN ACTION

Part Three of *Playbook for Justice* is all about how each of us can live a nonviolent life. It's not about doing so perfectly. There are simply choices we can make everyday to contribute more justice and more peace. When we train as a nonviolent athlete, we practice on three levels: with ourselves, with other people, and with our communities. Sometimes we work on all three levels at the same time. Sometimes we move between them, working on the parts of our lives that need the most attention. No matter what work we hope to do in our communities and in the world, an essential component is to start with ourselves.



Peace of Mind®

Peace of Mind is an organization whose mission is to educate students about mindfulness, brain science, conflict resolution and social justice to help them develop skills to enhance their own well-being and become peacemakers. They create, develop, and share The Peace of Mind Program, an innovative and relevant Pre-K-12 social and emotional learning curriculum that helps students notice and manage challenging emotions, build healthy relationships, solve conflicts peacefully, and stand up for what they believe in.

Peace of Mind partners with educators who deliver the program to students in elementary, middle, and high schools in the Washington D.C. area and beyond, nurturing a global movement of peace teachers. The following practices come from their secondary level curriculum. For more information and access to the full curriculum visit teachpeaceofmind.org.

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LESSON 1: DEVELOPING SELF-COMPASSION

Have you ever heard the phrase “your own worst enemy”? Humans can be really hard on themselves. Some activists find it harder to do the inner work than the outer work!

Nonviolence can help us develop a better relationship with our own minds, hearts, and bodies.

1. To explore your own level of self-compassion, think about a time a close friend felt bad or was really struggling.
    a. What did you say to them?
    b. What words did you use?
    c. What was your tone?

2. Next, think about a time you were really struggling or feeling negative about yourself.
    a. What was your response to yourself?
    b. What words did you use?
    c. What was your tone?

3. Comparing these two situations, is there a difference? If so, why? How can we use our experiences with friendship to treat ourselves with more self-compassion and kindness? How can we be "our own good friend"?

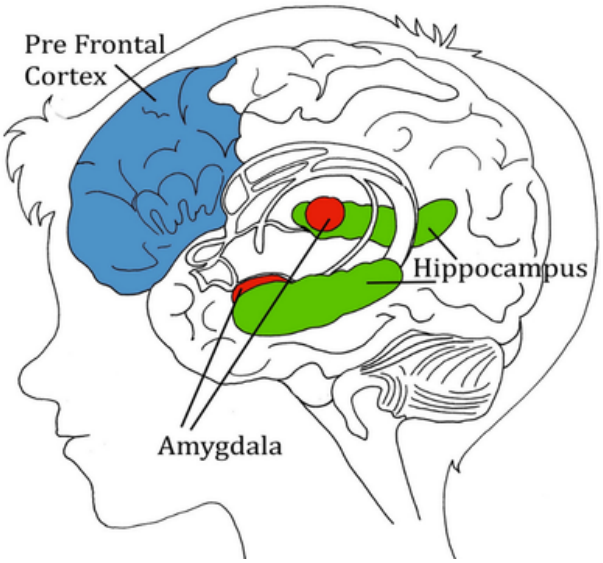
4. Discuss with a partner why self-compassion might be an important part of becoming a nonviolent athlete.

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LESSON 2:
LEARNING ABOUT THE BRAIN

The nonviolent athlete needs to know how their brain works. When it comes to emotional regulation, there are three important parts: the pre-frontal cortex, the hippocampus, and the amygdala.

Use reliable resources like the body dictionary at https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health to find out what each does and record your answers below.



Parts of the Brain	Role
Prefrontal Cortex	
Hippocampus	
Amygdala	

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What happens when the amygdala takes over?

When our amygdala takes over in a stressful situation, we react instinctively. This is helpful if a ball is flying towards our head. We just need to catch it or duck. But a quick, instinctive response can be unhelpful in other situations. Three common amygdala reactions are fight, flight, and freeze. Analyze the following situation and label each response.

During a test one student answers a few questions and then suddenly balls up his paper and throws it on the floor.	
Another student answers a few questions and then puts their pencil down and stares at their paper for the rest of the time.	
Another student asks to go to the bathroom and never comes back.	

Now imagine you're walking through a crowded hallway, and someone you've had drama with bumps into your shoulder hard and keeps walking without apologizing. What might each reaction look like? Share your responses with a partner. Which, if any, of the reactions are helpful? Which might lead to further conflict?

Fight	
Flight	
Freeze	

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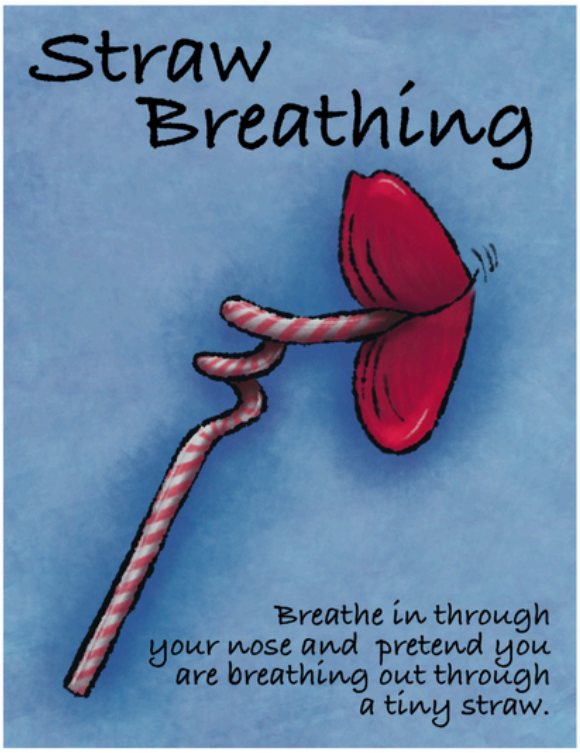
LESSON 3:
ALL ABOUT MINDFULNESS

Life is full of mishaps, missteps, stress, and challenging situations. The day might start out fine, but then we hear or see or experience something difficult. We might have been feeling happy and calm, but suddenly we feel angry or disappointed or embarrassed or scared. We might begin to fight, freeze, or take off before really thinking it through. One technique for navigating this rollercoaster is mindfulness. Mindfulness means paying attention to what's inside you and what's all around you. It does not mean clearing your mind of all thoughts. Mindfulness is a skill—like lifting weights for your brain—that helps you notice your thoughts, control your focus and manage your emotions, among other things.

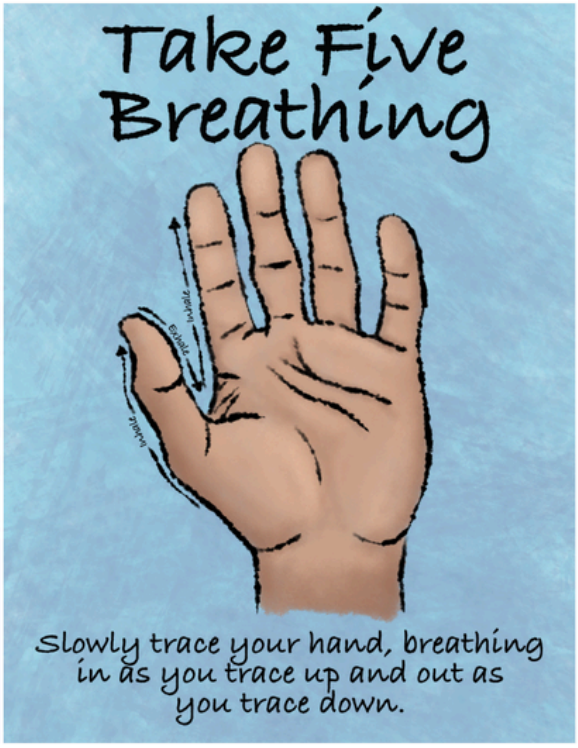
Mindfulness can be an important training tool for a nonviolent athlete. The key is to practice it before you need it. The following activities are actually called mindfulness practices. They work on both the mind and the body. They activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps slow down our heart rate and lower our blood pressure, so we can better access the thinking part of our brain. Then we can be strategic. Mindfulness is a great tool when we want to **respond** to a situation, not just react.

Use the mindfulness card set on the following page featuring original artwork by Avery Johnston to explore different techniques. Try them all. One might become your favorite.

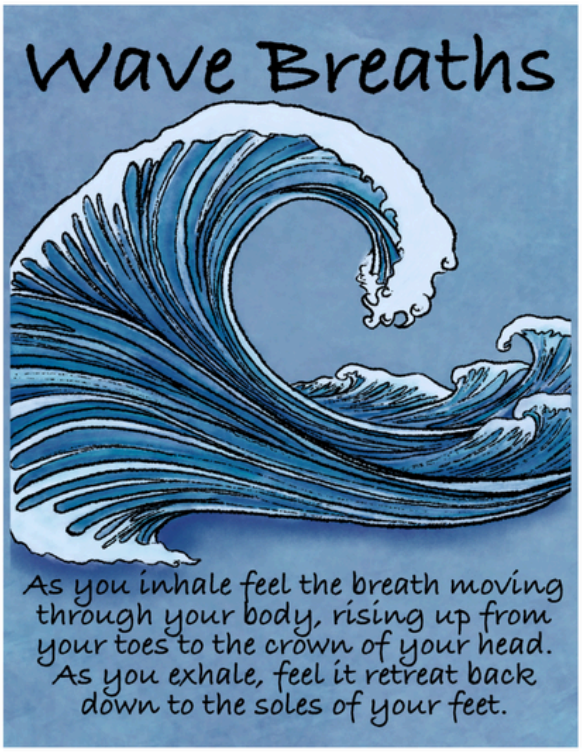
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original artwork by Avery Johnston



original artwork by Avery Johnston



original artwork by Avery Johnston



original artwork by Avery Johnston

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LESSON 4:
THE ABCD CONFLICT TOOL

As we become better at noticing and regulating our own emotions and actions, we can turn our attention to how we interact with others, especially during a conflict. We usually have a choice to escalate a conflict or to deescalate a conflict.

The ABCD Conflict Tool can help. When you are in the middle of a conflict, your amygdala wants you to react instantly to survive. The ABCD method is how you hit the brakes, check your dashboard, and hand the keys back to your Prefrontal Cortex (PFC).

A. ASSESS: Who is driving the bus?

- **Question**: Stop and check your internal state. Is your **amygdala** driving, or is your **PFC**?

B. BREATHE: Calm the amygdala

- **The Action**: Take a slow, deep mindful breath.
- **The Science**: You cannot reason your way out of an amygdala hijack with thoughts alone. A deep breath is a physical signal sent directly to your nervous system that says, "We are safe." It lowers your heart rate and cools down the brain's alarm so your logical PFC can come back online.

C. CONSIDER: What is my role?

- **Reflection**: Ask yourself honestly, "What did I do to escalate this conflict?"
- **Get curious**: Ask “What can I do to deescalate and get the situation back on track?”

D. DEESCALATE: Find a fair solution

- **The Strategy**: Now that your PFC is back in the driver's seat, use its creative problem-solving skills.
- **The Tools**: Instead of trying to "win" the fight, look for a logical exit ramp:
  - **Compromise**: Finding a middle ground where both people give a little to keep the peace.
  - **Brainstorming**: Thinking outside the box for a solution you hadn't considered when you were angry.

Activity Idea: Share the ABCD Conflict Tool with Others

- Make a poster or infographic informing others about the ABCD Conflict Tool.

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PLANNING FOR ACTION

As we work on implementing nonviolent strategies with ourselves and in our relationships, we can become inspired to think bigger. Our communities need us, and we need them. James Lawson taught the same four steps for action throughout all of the campaigns he worked on. He believed they could be applied to any issue, in any time and any place. It can be helpful to think of them as a cycle. A campaign might spiral through the steps over and over again until they accomplish their goal.

Focus	What is the problem you want to solve? Who is impacted? What might the solutions look like?
Negotiate	How did this problem develop? What is at stake? Who is involved or responsible? Who has the power to make the changes needed? What requests need to be made? Who is the best representative to make them?
Direct Action	If negotiations break down, what strategic actions might be effective? What would the goal be? What resources are needed? What is the best way to organize?
Follow-Up	How will you evaluate whether the plan has been effective? Who should be consulted to give feedback? What does resolution look like? What does reconciliation look like?

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Do Your Research

Often when we are inspired and fired up, we want to jump straight into action. But before we get to work, we need to be informed. History is riddled with examples of people who had the intent to help, but actually ended up causing harm. Research is an important step in preparing to be a nonviolent athlete because we want to show up with the information and skills to be effective. Research can help us identify issues we care about, find collaborators, and match our talents to actions that are needed. Activists also share strategies and learn from one another. A strategic campaign will build on what happened in the past and break new ground for the future.

- Build a timeline of nonviolent campaigns. Include the ones mentioned in the book and add ones that are missing. How have campaigns evolved over time? Which tactics are used over and over again?
- Using the four step framework, write a case study or create a presentation about a specific nonviolent campaign.
- Interview participants of a recent local campaign. What actions did they take? How might those actions fit into the four-step framework?
- Review the list of 198 methods of nonviolent action. Match at least five methods to specific demonstrations.

Suggested Sources

- https://www.zinnedproject.org/collection/student-protests/
- https://www.history.com/articles/history-of-student-protests
- https://commonslibrary.org/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action/
- https://worldbeyondwar.org/list/

Start with FOCUS

All strategic nonviolent campaigns start with the FOCUS step. This is where we:

1. choose an issue to work on
2. find and organize collaborators
3. identify the specific problem and potential solutions

Use the following resources to identify issues and organizations that align with your interests and values.

- Youth.gov has a list of 25 issues affecting young people with in-depth explanations and linked resources.
- Dosomething.org has toolkits for identifying issues, organizations, and actions.
- Justserve.org has listings of organizations requesting volunteers.

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The YPP Action Frame

Once we know what we want to work on and who we can work with, we can develop a plan for strategic action. From 2009 to 2017, scholars from the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics studied how digital technology has reshaped the ways in which young people participate in politics. From this study emerged the 10 Questions, which are designed to help young people develop successful—equitable, self-protective, and effective—civic agency in a digital age. More information and curricular resources are available at https://yppactionframe.fas.harvard.edu.

The YPP Action Frame is a series of ten questions that guide reflection during acts of civic participation. The questions are generally present and future oriented. We ask them of ourselves and about our plans for action.

1. Why does it matter to me?
2. How much should I share?
3. How do I make it about more than myself?
4. Where do we start?
5. How can we make it easy and engaging for others to join in?
6. How do we get wisdom from crowds?
7. How do we handle the downside of crowds?
8. Are you pursuing voice or influence or both?
9. How do we get from voice to changes?
10. How can we find allies?

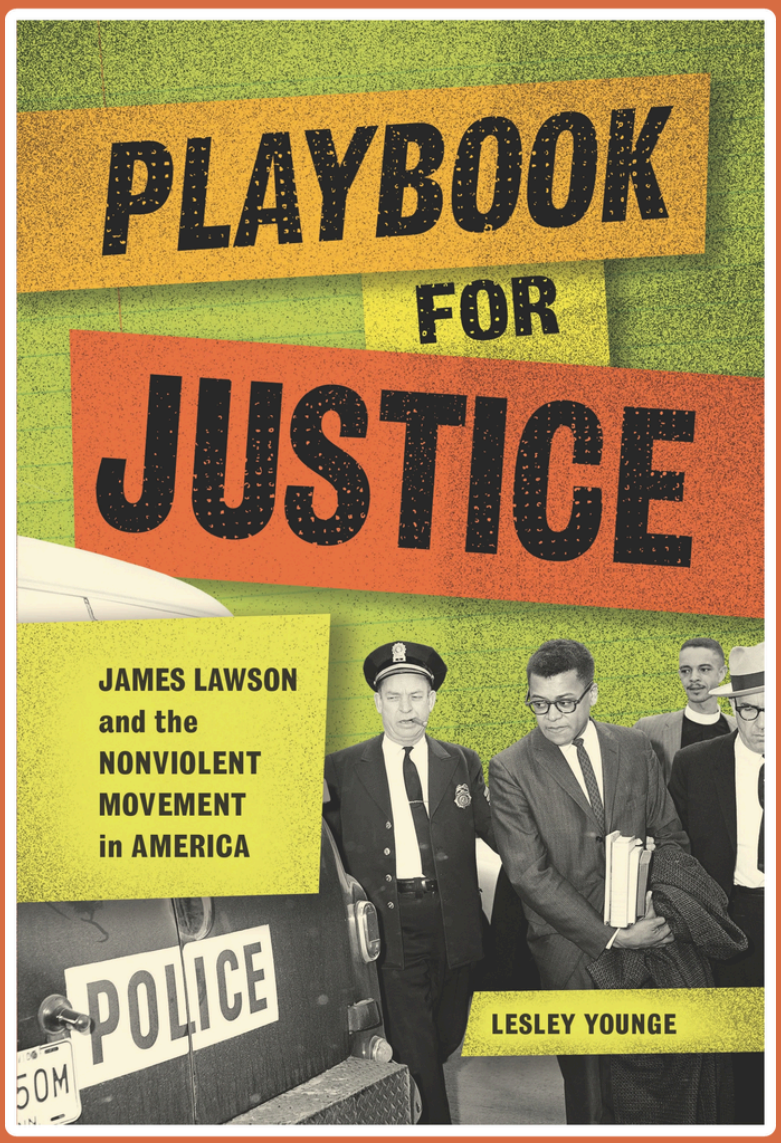
Which questions might be helpful while implementing the Four Steps for Strategic Nonviolent Action?

The curriculum "Civic Engagement in Our Democracy" was developed in collaboration with educators by the Democratic Knowledge Project, an initiative of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University.

> "Through nonviolence
> courage displaces fear
> love transforms hate
> acceptance dissipates prejudice
> hope ends despair
> peace dominates war."

What will nonviolence help you do?

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Playbook for Justice
James Lawson and the Nonviolent Movement in America

Ages: 11-18 HC: 979-8-7656-5989-2 • $39.99 (list) • $29.99 (S&L)
PB: 979-8-7656-5990-8 • $19.99 (list)
EB: 979-8-3480-4906-5 • $59.99 (list) • $49.99 (S&L)



Lesley Younge is a multi-genre writer, poet, and middle school educator. She is the author of several books for young people including the award-winning verse novel remix of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography *Nearer My Freedom* and the picture book *A-Train Allen*. Her latest books, *Playbook for Justice* and *Soulforce*, are both about the nonviolent life of Reverend James Lawson Jr. who was her childhood pastor. As an adult, Lesley participated in Lawson's nonviolence workshops. Visit teacherlesley.com for more information.