

**Acceptance Speech for AMWA award: Outstanding Community Service Award
Nov. 1, 2015**

My beloved friends, I greet you in the name of the powerful Love that unites us. I am the Rev. Doris Dalton, the executive director of the Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence and I am honored to be with you all tonight.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a revolutionary leader because he saw the possibility of strangers to become neighbors, and in becoming neighbors, to become the Beloved Community. He articulated his vision of what he called the Beloved Community as what would happen when we are able to obtain justice without violence, to have peace without the bloodshed of war, to have harmony and inclusion without racism or discrimination based on religion, and to have abundance without crushing the poor, the hungry, or the homeless. And the tools he wielded were Love, Courage and Nonviolence.

The MLK Institute was founded in 1987 out of a desire to build safe and fair communities by teaching the tools of nonviolence to youth and adults. Nonviolence is not just something you do to avoid violence, it is a path of your heart to actively seek justice without crushing anyone else's dignity, without using violence against any person. Nonviolence requires love to cross the boundaries within one's heart before crossing boundaries with one's hands or feet. Nonviolence requires courage to put others before oneself, even if it is a sacrifice. To be non-violent is to be a boundary-crosser, a risk-taker, and a truth-teller. It is a radical form of hospitality.

The MLK Institute crosses boundaries in many ways. We hold an annual conference for youth and law enforcement to dialogue and learn how to cross boundaries together. We have a MLK Freedom Library and invite people to cross boundaries to open their minds to new ideas and possibilities. Through the Celebration of Champions, WCPR and many other programs and events, we cross boundaries.

We have collaborated with the Interfaith Connection to hold an annual Interfaith Concert--a celebration of the music that unites our many faith traditions. When Islamophobia has peaked in recent years through negative rhetoric and hate speech, the MLK Institute has held interfaith dialogues to help our communities cross boundaries and learn about Islam, the beautiful authenticity of the faith and the richness of the

culture. And in doing so, we have become friends. We have become each other's neighbor.

Isn't that what community service is? Crossing boundaries, with love and courage, were we encounter a stranger and discover our friend. And we are so blessed to have you all as our friends.

On behalf of the co-chairs of the Board of Directors, Mrs. Julie Davis Carran and Mrs. Bridget Carter, and all members of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board of the MLK Institute, I accept this award and thank you for this distinction. We are highly honored and deeply humbled. We know it is impossible to do our work without a community that is as committed to nonviolence. We are incredibly grateful that you are a part of our community. Together, we will continue to cross boundaries in the name of Love.

Amen.