

Justifying Non-Violent Civil Disobedience within the Kenyan Context:

A Moral Perspective

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Abstract

This paper employs the critical and analytical techniques of philosophical reflection to present a moral justification for the use of non-violent civil disobedience by Kenyan citizens in pursuit of their aspirations. It sets out with a brief review of political disobedience in Kenya from the advent of the British invasion and domination of the country in the late nineteenth century to the present. Next, it examines the nature of non-violent civil disobedience, outlining the views of four of its most influential advocates, namely, Étienne de La Boétie, Henry David Thoreau,

Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. It then offers a moral justification for non-violent civil disobedience by presenting nine arguments in its favour, with special reference to the Kenyan context. Thereafter, it answers six objections to non-violent civil disobedience. The paper concludes that it is high time that Kenyans gave serious consideration to a commitment to non-violent civil disobedience.

Key Words. Civil disobedience, moral justification, violence, Kenya