



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

## HANDOUT 1

### WE SHALL OVERCOME: INFORMATION AND LYRICS

“We Shall Overcome” is generally associated with the African American civil rights movement (1955–68) as a protest song and anthem of the movement. However the song has deep roots. The lyrics are derived from a gospel song, “I’ll Overcome Some Day,” by Charles Tindley. The melody is from the nineteenth-century spiritual “No More Auction Block for Me,” which dates to before the civil war.

The Highlander Research and Educational Center in Tennessee was at the center of the song’s transition through the decades. The adaptation began with Zilphia Horton, music director of the Highlander Folk School, which trained union organizers. By 1959, the Center was focusing on nonviolent civil rights activism. The new song director, Guy Carawan, modified the song with Candy Carawan and others and made it what we know today.

Famous folk singers like Pete Seeger and Joan Baez often sang the song at rallies, festivals, and concerts in the North and helped make it widely known. Since that time, the song and others based on it have been used in protests worldwide.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,  
We shall overcome someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,  
We are not afraid today;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We are not afraid today.

The Lord will see us through, the Lord will see  
us through,  
The Lord will see us through someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall overcome someday.

The truth shall make us free, the truth shall  
make us free,  
The truth shall make us free someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
The truth shall make us free someday.

We’re on to victory, We’re on to victory,  
We’re on to victory someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We’re on to victory someday.

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace,  
We shall live in peace someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We shall live in peace someday.

We’ll walk hand in hand, we’ll walk hand in  
hand,  
We’ll walk hand in hand someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,  
We’ll walk hand in hand someday.