Opinion
Guest Voices



James Lawson speaks at a picket against Ralphs supermarket in Los Angeles July 9, 2019. (Wikimedia Commons/ufcw770)



by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with writer Emily Yellin, coauthor of the new posthumous memoir by Civil Rights leader the Rev. James Lawson. *Nonviolent: My Life of Resistance, Agitation, and Love*, which is available Feb. 17 from Random House.

Lawson was my friend for 34 years. I first met him in jail during a protest in 1990 and he later hired me to be director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Lawson was taught nonviolence by his mother, went to prison for refusing to be drafted into the Korean War and spent years in India learning nonviolence from Mahatma Gandhi's friends.



Emily Yellin (Penguin Random House/Darius B. Williams)

He then returned to the U.S. to join Martin Luther King Jr. to become the main strategist for the Civil Rights Movement, helping organize the lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham Children's Crusade, the march in Selma, and the Memphis sanitation workers' strike. He spent the remainder of his life organizing and speaking out in Los Angeles.

"One of the things that stunned me about Rev. Lawson," said Yellin, a longtime writer for The New York Times, "was his consistency with nonviolence that came

from a deep conviction to love."

"Jim Lawson was the best example of how to live a life that leads with love and does no harm," Yellin said. "One of his core teachings was, 'We can't imitate the evil ways of our oppressors.' Nonviolence is the way to build a more loving and just world, he taught."

Listen to the full episode here.

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