

The Power of Liberating Nonviolence

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Liberating Nonviolence is a force for transformation, truth, justice, and the well-being of all that is neither violent nor passive. It is transforming power (Alternatives to Violence), cooperative power (Jonathan Schell), the love that does justice (Martin Luther King, Jr.) and love in action (Dorothy Day). It is an active form of resistance to systems of privilege and domination, a philosophy for liberation, an approach to movement building, a tactic of non-cooperation, and a practice we can employ to transform the world (War Resisters League).

Liberating Nonviolence is a stand for justice and a method for helping to create it. It pursues this goal, not with passivity or retaliation, but with the third way of creative engagement and loving and determined resistance. Liberating Nonviolence has “two hands” that are in creative tension: noncooperation with injustice *and* steadfast regard for the opponent as a human being.

Liberating Nonviolence is the power of creative love in contrast to the power of fear, hate and greed. It is an orientation, a set of principles, a method, and specific strategies that put this power of love into practice. Love, in this context, is the process of acknowledging, safeguarding and engaging with the humanness, woundedness, and sacredness of others, while creatively challenging their violence and injustice.

Liberating Nonviolence is a way of life and a means of transforming the world. It challenges the power of and belief in violence and its destructiveness geared toward threatening, dominating, or defeating others. Liberating Nonviolence, by contrast, is a form of unifying power: connecting, compassionate, communicative, and creative.

Liberating Nonviolence in Action

Nonviolence is a beautiful theory but it doesn't work in the real world, critics have long argued. It is, they maintain, ineffective, passive, weak, utopian, naïve, unpatriotic, marginal, simplistic, and impractical. In spite of these widely held assumptions, however, people around the planet go on building one nonviolent people-power movement after another. Rather than being held back by pervasive beliefs about nonviolence as otherworldly and unrealistic, they act *as if* the vision, strategies, and tools of nonviolent change are transformative and effective. We are consequently awash in a growing proliferation of nonviolent campaigns building more democratic societies, championing human rights, struggling for economic justice, and working to safeguard the planet. As detailed in historian Jonathan Schell's book, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People* (2003), organizing nonviolent people power for liberation and human rights has emerged and increased over the past 300 years. Beginning in the twentieth century this momentum accelerated with Mohandas Gandhi's application of principled nonviolence to win Indian independence and with the use of disciplined nonviolence by the US Civil Rights Movement.

These and other pioneering campaigns have inspired countless nonviolent struggles. Some examples include successful pro-democracy movements in Spain and Portugal (1970s), the Philippines (1986), Chile (1980s), Argentina (1980s), Soviet bloc states, including the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, etc. (1989); the thwarted coup in the USSR (1991); South Africa (1980s-1990s); Indonesia (1998); East Timor (2000); Serbia (2000); Georgia (2003); Ukraine (2004); Liberia (2005); and Tunisia and Egypt (2011). These are not isolated cases; a recent book by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (*Why Civil Resistance Works*) analyzed 323 major social struggles across the globe between 1900 and 2006 and concluded that nonviolent campaigns have been twice as successful as violent ones.

Methods of Liberating Nonviolence include:

- Exposing violence and injustice
- Demonstrating how violence and injustice violate deeply-held values
- Withdrawing the “pillars of support” that create and maintain violence and injustice
- Breaking the cycle of retaliatory violence

- Unleashing people-power by alerting, educating, winning and mobilizing the populace to withdraw consent for practices, policies and conditions of violence and injustice

Nonviolent Change is Possible Because:

- We all matter
- We all are connected
- We all are wounded
- We all are sacred
- We all have a piece of the truth
- We all can love and be loved

Nonviolent Change is Possible Because Human Beings Can Choose To:

- Ease suffering
- Challenge fear
- Transform Us vs. Them
- Decline to be enemies
- End support for violence
- Imagine another way

Some of Mohandas Gandhi's Principles of Nonviolence

- Seek the truth
- Love the enemy
- Do not cooperate with humiliation and injustice
- Work for the well-being of all
- Be fearless
- All life is one
- Difference without division
- Each of us has a piece of the truth and a piece of the un-truth
- Resist "us" versus "them" thought and behavior
- Means must be consistent with the ends
- Human beings are more than the violence they commit

Dr. Martin Luther King's Principles of Nonviolent Resistance

- Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
- Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.
- Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
- Nonviolence holds that voluntary suffering can educate and transform.
- Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.
- Nonviolence holds that the universe is on the side of justice

Some Liberating Nonviolence Websites:

- <http://WagingNonviolence.org> <http://paceebene.org>
- <http://change.org> www.godblesstheworld.org

"I had a student at the University of Maryland who wrote a 13-word paper that has stayed with me: 'Question: Why are we violent but not illiterate? Answer: Because we are taught to read.'" (Colman McCarthy)