

Campaign Nonviolence:
A Grassroots Movement with hundreds of actions in all 50 states, Sept. 16-24, 2017
Speaking out against war, poverty, racism and environmental destruction,
Pursuing a new culture of peace and nonviolence for all

By John Dear

The Failure of Violence,
The Possibilities of Active Nonviolence

We now live in a world of total violence—with over 30 wars, 800 million people starving, 3.5 billion people living in extreme poverty, 16,000 nuclear weapons still on alert, corporate greed decimating the world's poor, and catastrophic climate change threatening us all. This world of permanent war, greed and destruction has become normal, routine, and legal. Violence is everywhere, everyone sees the failure of violence, and yet many say there's nothing that can be done about it.

But many more still are fed up with the world's violence, and are turning instead to the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr., the vision of peace and nonviolence, which is at the heart of all the world's religions. They want everyone to start practicing and institutionalizing nonviolence so that the suffering, killing, injustice and warmaking will end, and we can embark on a new culture of peace with justice, a new world of nonviolence.

Many people are beginning to realize the truth of Dr. King's teachings—that violence doesn't work, that nonviolence always works, that nonviolence is not just an unrealistic ideal but a practical, realistic goal, that we can organize and institutionalize nonviolence; that we can unlearn the ways of violence and teach everyone everywhere to become nonviolent and solve international conflict nonviolently. As we move closer to the brink of global destruction through war, poverty, racism and catastrophic climate change, nonviolence is becoming, in fact, the only sane, rational, intelligent choice left.

War and weapons, corporate greed and environmental destruction have failed to bring about a world of peace. Creative nonviolence, as Gandhi and King taught, works whenever it is tried. That's what the historical record now proves. If we spent trillions of dollars, not on war and weapons, but on the means of peace--nonviolent civilian based defense systems, nonviolent international peace teams, nonviolent intervention, diplomacy, dialogue, and nonviolent responses to terrorism--and worked to feed everyone, meet real human needs and clean up the earth—people everywhere could one day live in peace. If we stopped our own terrorist attacks--such as our drone raids on impoverished villages--and stopped threatening the world with our nuclear weapons, we could use those resources to fund global food and clean water distribution, free universal healthcare, and low income housing and schools. Not only would we win the world over with this peacemaking and end terrorism, we could abolish war and extreme poverty. We would make our world safer for children, and start humanity down a new path toward universal love, universal justice, and universal solidarity.

“Humanity must put an end to war or war will put an end to humanity,” Dr. King preached at the National Cathedral a few days before the U.S. government killed him. “It is no longer a choice, my friends, between violence and nonviolence,” he said. “It is either nonviolence or nonexistence, and the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a greater suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to strengthening the United Nations and thereby disarming the whole world, may well be an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.”

“Humanity has to get out of violence only by nonviolence,” Mahatma Gandhi wrote. “Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. We have to make truth and nonviolence not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream.”

Thousands of people around the nation and the world pursue the dream and vision of nonviolence. They are practicing nonviolence in their daily lives, renouncing violent behavior and their support of militarism, and joining and organizing global grassroots movements of nonviolence so that one day the world's children might live in peace with justice.

All around the world, people are on the move, activating nonviolent change. They are waking up, meeting, organizing, demonstrating, speaking out and challenging the culture of violence and injustice--armed only with the power of nonviolence. And they are making a positive, and lasting, difference.

In the midst of the twentieth century's worst horrors, the best organized movements of nonviolence in history unfolded—starting with Gandhi's nonviolent independence campaign against British imperialism, and Dr. King's nonviolent Civil Rights movement against racist American segregation. What we forget is that these movements led to thousands of other nonviolent movements that are still unfolding today. The anti-Vietnam movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the anti-death penalty movement, the anti-nuclear movement, and countless others owe a profound debt to the vision and strategic action of Gandhi and King. Within decades, the Marcos dictatorship was brought down; the Soviet Union collapsed; apartheid was abolished; Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa; Liberian women nonviolently overthrew the deadly dictatorship of Charles Taylor; the Occupy movement fought Wall Street greed; the Arab Spring began to wake up those living under Middle Eastern dictatorship; and millions marched against poverty in Brazil. And these are only the most well known examples. Over 900 other cases are documented and analyzed on the Global Nonviolent Action Database, see: www.nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu.

On February 12, 2003, some twelve million people marched in over 620 cities on every continent in protest of a war that hadn't even begun yet. It was the single greatest day of protest in the history of the world. This alone was an incredible historical breakthrough that still promises to bear good fruit for humanity. The U.S. attack on Iraq was not prevented, but the peace movement continued to grow and eventually created the political conditions to bring the war to an end. As the New York Times said in an editorial the next day after the global mobilization, the world now has two superpowers---the United States and the global grassroots peace movement.

When we use our political power for positive change, we discover we are stronger than we once thought. That's what ordinary people are learning once again. Change happens not from the top down, but from the bottom up, through grassroots movements of peace and nonviolence. Nonviolence, we are learning, is power.

"We can change the world if we do it nonviolently," Cesar Chavez once said. "If we can just show people how they can organize nonviolently, we can't fail. Nonviolence has never failed when it's been tried."

In recent decades, as Walter Wink and others have pointed out, some two thirds of the human race has been personally involved in local, national, or international struggles for justice and peace. That's an astonishing fact, one you won't hear on the nightly news. People are moving. They are getting involved to change the unjust status quo. And they're using the only weapon available to them--the power of nonviolence. What's even more astonishing than the massive numbers involved in this emerging global struggle is the evidence that when active, organized nonviolence is applied to entrenched violent establishments, it works!

Unlike violence, organized nonviolent movements often fly under the pro-war media radar. They're slow, and rarely televised. While violence makes the evening news—with daily terrorist bombings, drone attacks, corporate greed and military lies—nonviolence remains hard to measure, hard to quantify, and sometimes hard to see. Yet it builds up and grows slowly until, suddenly, it appears like a tidal wave out of nowhere—like the People Power movement which swept the Filipino Marcos dictatorship out in four days. Suddenly, peaceful revolution occurs and the streets are filled with celebration. No one ever asks how it happened. Usually, it was preceded by years, even decades, of quiet movement building, organizing and nonviolence training.

Recently, Columbia University Press published an extraordinary scholarly book that proves how nonviolence works far better as a method for social change than violence. This breakthrough work demonstrates that Gandhi was right all along, that the method of nonviolent resistance as a way to social change usually leads to a more lasting peace, while violence usually fails. It challenges all of us to teach this methodology of global change, and more, to join the struggle.

[*Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*](#) by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan uses graphs, charts, sociological research and statistical analysis to show how over the last century nonviolent movements were far better at mobilizing supporters, resisting regime crackdowns, creating new initiatives, defeating repressive regimes and establishing lasting democracies. Their evidence points to the conclusion that nonviolent resistance works far better than armed resistance in overturning oppressive and repressive regimes, and in leading to more democratic societies.

This report should cause the whole world to take up nonviolent conflict resolution and nonviolent resistance to injustice, instead of maintaining the tired, obsolete methods of war and violence.

[*Why Civil Resistance Works*](#) is the first systematic study of its kind, and takes us beyond the brilliant research of Gene Sharp and other pioneering analysts of nonviolent power to demonstrate once and for all the power of nonviolent civil resistance for positive social change. One wishes the U.S. government (including the U.S. State Department) would learn its lessons, renounce its violence and start supporting nonviolent, people power movements. But if the government refuses the wisdom of nonviolence, we the people need not be so naïve or ignorant. We need to do our homework, and learn what's worked in past struggles as we embark on even greater struggles.

For more than a century, from 1900 to 2006, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were “more than twice as effective as their violent counterparts in achieving their stated goals,” the authors conclude. By attracting widespread popular support through protests, boycotts, civil disobedience and other forms of nonviolent noncooperation, these campaigns broke repressive regimes and brought major new changes for justice and peace. Through their statistical analysis, they found that nonviolent resistance presents “fewer obstacles to moral and physical involvement and commitment, and that higher levels of participation contribute to enhanced resilience, greater opportunities for tactical innovation and civic disruption (and therefore less incentive for a regime to maintain its status quo), and shifts in loyalty among opponents' supporters, including members of the military establishment.”

Contrary to popular belief, “violent insurgency is rarely justifiable on strategic grounds,” they write. “Nonviolent resistance ushers in more durable and internally peaceful democracies, which are less likely to regress into civil war.”

Launching Campaign Nonviolence

During the week of September 21-27, 2014, tens of thousands of Americans took to the streets simultaneously in 231 local nonviolent actions in all fifty states to publicly oppose the epidemic of violence, and to call for a new culture of peace and nonviolence free from war, poverty, racism and ongoing environmental destruction. A year later, during the week of September 20-27, 2015, 371 nonviolent actions took place across the nation in all fifty states and 758 actions took place in September 2016!

These actions launched Campaign Nonviolence's long term movement to connect the dots between war, poverty, racism and environmental destruction; strengthen the grassroots movements for social change; promote a new culture of justice, peace and nonviolence; and actually take nonviolence in the mainstream. For the first time, local grassroots actions were held across the nation that connected all the various issues and aspects of violence that challenge us all, while upholding the Kingian vision of a new culture of peace and nonviolence.

Hundreds of organizations have endorsed Campaign Nonviolence. The Campaign is actively growing on facebook and twitter. In 2015 we held a Campaign Nonviolence national conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Aug. 6-9, 2015, with keynote speakers Rev. Jim Lawson and Prof. Erica Chenoweth; all the talks and the peace vigils at Los Alamos were filmed and can be viewed now on You Tube. We encourage you to watch them, and catch the spirit of Campaign Nonviolence.

Campaign Nonviolence calls upon the people of the United States to organize, march and work for the abolition of war, poverty, racism and environmental destruction, and for the coming of a new culture of peace and nonviolence. This year, we will take to the streets again, during the week of September 16-24, 2017, in hundreds of nonviolent actions across the nation. We pursue the Gandhian/Kingian vision of nonviolence, that we might practice nonviolence individually, communally, nationally, and globally, and welcome a new world of nonviolence. We want to build a contagious, unstoppable grassroots movement of nonviolence that will help lead to a new culture of nonviolence for ourselves and the whole human family.

The Goals of Campaign Nonviolence: Addressing War, Poverty, Racism and Environmental Destruction; Promoting a New Culture of Peace and Nonviolence

Through Campaign Nonviolence, tens of thousands of ordinary Americans across the nation will take to the streets each year to speak out against war, poverty, racism and environmental destruction, and call for a new culture of peace and nonviolence. Their goals include:

- the abolition of war and nuclear weapons; drastically cutting the U.S. military budget; funding nonviolent, non-military civilian-based defense systems and nonviolent conflict resolution programs; abolishing the U.S. drone bombing system; closing most of the 730 U.S. military bases around the planet; abolishing our nuclear weapons; cleaning up the environmental destruction at our nuclear plants and sites; and fulfilling the NPT treaty;
- the abolition of extreme poverty at home and abroad; the end of hunger at home and around the world; using the billions of dollars formerly spent on war and nuclear weapons to fund public food and housing programs at home and abroad, improve our schools and healthcare at home and abroad; offer nonviolent jobs; establish a \$15 minimum wage for all Americans; create a more justice immigration program, and welcome millions of immigrants; and in particular, guide corporations and extremely wealthy people to use their resources for the services of others, especially the poor, in the nation and the world;
- the abolition of racism throughout the United States and the world; by ending systemic racism in our cities and schools; abolishing the death penalty; fixing our broken criminal justice and prison system; ending mass incarceration; training officers to be nonviolent; and educating every American and everyone in the world in the methodologies of nonviolent conflict resolution, so we can decrease racism, sexism, economic classism and violence and help each other live together in peace as sisters and brothers;
- working to end catastrophic climate change; a dramatic increase in funding for renewable energy/alternatives to fossil fuels, such as solar and wind programs; the aggressive pursuit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; active cleaning up of our water, land and air; signing an international treaty for swift, verifiable action to reverse climate change and aggressive nonviolent action to protect all creatures and all creation;
- and actively pursuing, discussing, promoting and funding a new culture of peace and nonviolence, where all Americans and all human beings on the planets are taught to be nonviolent toward themselves, toward all others, all creatures, and all creation; that means, funding education for every child at home and abroad in the methodology of nonviolent conflict resolution and nonviolent living; promoting nonviolence as a way of life; getting at the roots of violence in the U.S. and around the world so that we can stop the causes of violence; controlling handguns; promoting teachers, examples and movements of nonviolence, such as Gandhi, Dr. King and Mandela; and working to make nonviolent communities and cultures a reality. This will involve training young people, ordinary Americans, community leaders, and everyone around the world in the way of nonviolence.

The Campaign Nonviolence Pledge:

As we build this grassroots campaign and work for a new world of nonviolence, together we take this pledge:

I wholeheartedly pledge to take a stand against violence and to help build a culture of active nonviolence. I will strive to:

- ***Practice nonviolence toward myself;***
- ***Practice nonviolence toward all others;***
- ***and Practice nonviolence by joining the global movement to abolish war, end poverty and racism, stop the destruction of the earth, and foster a more just, peaceful and nonviolent world for all.***