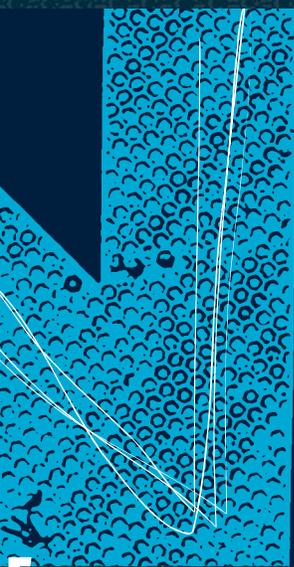




NONVIOLENCE

another path



FROM THE HOLY CROSS INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE OFFICE





Do not believe in violence;
do not support violence.
It is not the Christian way.
It is not the way of the **Catholic Church.**

John Paul II
Killiney, Ireland, 1979

Violence is endemic to our global society.

- ★ In the last decade, 103 armed conflicts caused 100 million deaths in 40 countries. Nine out of 10 fatalities in these wars were innocent civilians, half of them children.
- ★ Torture is government policy in at least 40 countries and occurs in more than 100.
- ★ Worldwide, terrorist attacks have increased eightfold over the last two decades.
- ★ Globally, at least one out of three women is beaten, raped, or otherwise abused during her lifetime.

But “violence” extends even beyond such psychological and physical attacks. Today we recognize that violence can also occur in more subtle forms. People and creation can be violated by exploitative, unjust social, political, and economic systems and structures. And cultures can perpetrate violence by legitimating violent responses to conflict and normalizing hostility and aggression, especially against those who are “different.”

Whatever the form of violence, its roots are the same. At the heart of all violence is the perception that someone or something is *other*—radically different and separate, of little or no intrinsic value. *Othering* dissociates self from others—distancing, objectifying and giving psychic permission to harm. Ultimately, all human violence flows from forgetting or denying the fundamental interconnectedness of all that is.

There is no hope for the
aching world except through
the narrow and straight
path of nonviolence.

Mahatma Gandhi

There *is* another way, one that embodies a core teaching of all major religions and, now, of contemporary science. It is the way of *nonviolence*, rooted in the reality that all beings, while different, are ultimately one—interpenetrating, interconnected and interdependent. Separateness is, as Einstein put it, an “optical delusion”; harming another also harms self and the whole. Nonviolence, in its deepest sense, is living this insight.

Persistent Resistance

Nonviolence is best known as an alternate way to resist oppression and evil. Based on belief in our radical unity and the principle of “non-harming,” nonviolence refuses to demonize, actively confronting opponents in ways that respect their dignity.

Nonviolence works by persuasion—through dialogue and negotiation where possible; where not, through actions geared to engage the opponent’s conscience and heart. Practitioners hold that when violence is met with love, forgiveness, and willingness to suffer, opponents can be vitally touched and transformed.

Gandhi called this dynamic *Satyagraha* or *soul force*—“the greatest, most activist force in the world.” For Gandhi and those he inspires, nonviolent resistance is a science based on the insight that social/political power depends on cooperation. When people suspend cooperation and withhold consent, they unleash the power to compel change.

There are hundreds of ways to resist nonviolently: demonstrations and marches, boycotts, public fasts, street theater, strikes and civil disobedience to name just a few. But regardless of tactic, in nonviolent struggle, the goal is always the same: to restore a sense of connection between oppressor and oppressed and resolve conflicts peacefully. When most successful, nonviolence changes *relationships* as well as external realities, converting adversaries to partners.



Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil
by doing good.

Romans 12:21

But is nonviolence practical? Can it truly counter violence and bring about change? The answer is a resounding “yes.” From the earliest days of history, nonviolent actions/campaigns have proven successful. In our time, the most familiar are Gandhi’s campaign for India’s independence and the U.S. civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. But there are thousands of less known examples:

- * In Rwanda, a tribal militia bent on genocide herded children out of their school, ordering them to separate into Hutus and Tutsis. The children, knowing what would follow, refused. The soldiers harassed them, but the children persisted. Befuddled, the soldiers simply gave up and left.
- * In India, the Chipko movement, led primarily by village women, stopped deforestation by embracing the trees—putting their own

Those who live by the sword will perish by the sword.

Matthew 5:44

bodies between trees and contractors' axes. Their actions saved forests, protected peoples' livelihoods and generated pressure for policies more sensitive to human needs and ecological integrity.

- ★ In Tambogrande, Peru, residents successfully defended their rich agricultural land against government and corporate plans to construct an open-pit gold mine in the town. Strikes and petition drives led to a public referendum: mining vs. agriculture. The proposed mine was rejected by a vote of 98 percent.

But even when nonviolence fails to achieve an immediate goal, it succeeds in significant ways. Though nonviolent action sometimes evokes a violent response, it breaks the *cycle* of violence. The persistent refusal to return violence for violence, whatever the consequence, renders violence impotent and opens space for reconciliation and healing. Adversaries and on-lookers are invited to embrace another path, and society moves closer to a culture of peace.

Crafting a global culture of peace

Nonviolence *is* an effective way to oppose oppression and evil, but it is far more than a way to resist and obstruct. Gandhi, master of nonviolent campaigns, doggedly held that although nonviolence had remarkable power to protest and disrupt, its real power was to create and construct—to steadily infuse society with values, energy and eventually systems not grounded in violence. The deepest meaning of nonviolence is not dramatic confrontation, but slow, constant work to permeate society with empathy and solidarity and redeem cultural and political space from hostility, domination and aggression. How can we participate in that redemptive process?

In today's reality, constructing a culture of peace will require profound change. Necessary steps will include:

- ★ ***Defusing the violence within***

All nonviolence begins with "internal disarmament," harnessing interior forces that give birth to violence, like anger, anxiety and greed. Meditation practices such as Christian centering prayer or Buddhist mindfulness are invaluable in this struggle, training us to intervene where violence begins—in hostile feelings and thoughts.

- ★ ***Cultivating right speech***

Language shapes thought and thought, in turn, shapes actions. Today, language is permeated with aggressive terms, metaphors and images, and euphemisms that mask violence. We *attack* problems, *kill* time, *shoot down* arguments, and report "killing civilians" as *collateral damage*. Becoming conscious of violent or misleading language and studiously removing it from speech helps mold nonviolent minds.

- ★ ***Educating for peace***

Key to any cultural shift is education, especially of youth. But much "education" today fosters materialism and competition, attitudes often leading to violence. Teaching critical analysis

of culture, and revising curricula to promote peaceful values and cultivate conflict resolution and dialogue skills is crucial to ensuring a nonviolent future.

★ **Exorcising the media**

Films, television and other mass media are captivated by violence. News reports sensationalize it, “action films” and popular music celebrate it, and video games trivialize it. The media’s ubiquitous violence numbs minds and hearts, rendering actual violence unreal. Boycotting programming that glorifies violence and insisting on choice can pressure media to give up its obsession with violence and play a constructive role in shaping society.

★ **Building a global movement**

Transforming culture will require masses of people committed to social change. Grassroots communities must be trained in active nonviolence and linked with local, national and international peacebuilding organizations. Using the Internet, organizations can effectively network, share information and strategies, and coordinate actions and campaigns globally—together forging a more peaceful society.

★ **Advocating alternatives**

Together, militarism and corporate globalization wreak havoc on most of the world’s people and Earth itself. A culture of nonviolence presumes alternatives: economic systems that enrich the *whole* Earth community, functioning mediation/negotiation structures to resolve international conflict, nonviolent systems of national defense, and authentic democracies built on citizen participation and governmental accountability. Piece by piece, we must resolutely replace our current culture of violence with a culture of peace, one that embodies justice, respect and compassion.

In the *Earth Charter* we read “peace is the wholeness created by right relationships—with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole...” Crafting a culture of peace and nonviolence will be neither simple nor easy, but it *is* possible. Nobel Peace Laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel gives us the key:

To create this new society, we must present outstretched, friendly hands—without hatred, without rancor—even as we show great determination, never wavering in the defense of truth and justice. Because we know that seeds are not sown with clenched fists. To sow, we must open our hands.

One day we shall win freedom,
but not only for ourselves.
We shall so appeal to your heart
and conscience that we shall win
you in the process, and our victory
shall be a double victory.

Martin Luther King Jr.

What Can We Do?

1

Practice peacebuilding within

- * Work intentionally to recognize and defuse hostile or violent strains in your thoughts and feelings.
- * Watch your language! Try to eliminate violent, militaristic terms from your speech and thoughts.

2

Learn about the history and practice of nonviolence

- * On your own or with others, study successful nonviolent campaigns and the lives of those who have led them, especially those from your own country/region.
- * Teach meditation, conflict resolution, dialogue and mediation skills, and other tools of nonviolence in schools, parishes and congregational formation programs.
- * Learn about nonviolent, third-party intervention by peace “armies” like the Christian Peacemakers Team < www.cpt.org > and Nonviolence Peaceforce < www.nvpf.org > (English, French and Spanish).

3

Resist cultural violence

- * Join the campaigns against violent video games < www.iccr.org/issues/violence/featured.php > and “war toys” < www.cpt.org/violent_toys/toys98.php > .
- * Oppose violence in the media. Contact broadcasters and object to violent programming; contact advertisers and refuse to buy their products.
- * Violence against minorities and marginalized peoples everywhere is on the increase. Join in nonviolent actions and campaigns to obtain their basic human rights to security and right livelihood.

4

Promote nonviolent alternatives

- * Gandhi said, “Poverty is the worst form of violence.” Hold your government accountable to the U.N.’s *Millennium Development Goals*—a blueprint to meet the needs of the world’s poorest people while protecting Earth.
- * Support the United Nations—our primary means for solving international conflicts and maintaining peace and security.
- * Back political candidates who oppose war and promote diplomatic solutions to international conflict.

5

Speak out for peace and nonviolence

- * Join a local, national or international organization committed to active nonviolence and peacemaking as a way of life and means of social transformation.
- * Respond to e-mail Action Alerts from the Holy Cross Action Center.

6

Ritualize your commitment to building a culture of peace

- * Sign the United Nations’ *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence* at < www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000 > (English, French and Spanish).
- * Consider making a Vow of Nonviolence. For ideas from various traditions, see < www.interfaithpathstopeace.org/vow.asp > .
- * Demonstrate your community’s commitment to peace and nonviolence by erecting a Peace Pole in a public space < www.worldpeace.org/peacepoles.html > .

Resources

Pace e Bene < www.paceebene.org > cultivates nonviolent living and the emergence of nonviolent culture through training, publishing, advocacy and spiritual practice. The site contains extensive resources on all aspects of nonviolence.

Resources Advancing Initiatives in Nonviolence (RAIN)

< www.rainonline.org > develops resources that explore the creativity and spirituality of active nonviolence, including media that tell stories of nonviolent resistance through video, print and web format.

Peace X Peace (pronounced “peace by peace”) < www.peacexpeace.org > works to improve the status of women and build a sustainable peace by linking women’s peacebuilding efforts in a global network of women’s circles. The site contains “News of the Week” about women and peace, a monthly newsletter *Peace Times*, numerous “Peace Papers,” and many other resources.

Web Sites

Books



Is There No Other Way?: The Search for a Nonviolent Future, Michael Nagler, Inner Ocean Publishing (soon to be reissued by a new publisher), 2004. Tracing the achievements of Mahatma Gandhi and others around the world, Nagler contends that nonviolence has proven its power against arms and social injustice. But he also insists that the fullest force of nonviolence is constructive—building a global culture of peace that begins with our own “internal disarmament.”



Allow the Water, Leonard Desroches, Trafford Publishing, 2004. Desroches provides a broad vision of the spirituality and practice of nonviolence—from resisting violence and social injustice to reconciling personal anger and fear. Stories of his own experiences and those of others who have chosen the path of nonviolence make the book eminently readable (English and French).



Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation, Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, 1997. Many books discuss Gandhi’s nonviolent campaigns and political revolution. Easwaran describes the *personal* revolution by which a simple, inarticulate man transformed himself into the Mahatma who ushered the British Empire out of India without firing a shot. This is a study not of Gandhi’s politics, but of his spirituality and way of life.



From Violence to Wholeness, Ken Butigan and Patricia Bruno, O.P., Pace e Bene, 2002. A 10-part study and action program that explores active nonviolence as a creative, powerful and effective process for addressing and resolving conflicts in our personal lives and the life of the world. The program offers participants the vision of a constructive alternative to violence and practical tools for translating the vision into reality (English, French and Spanish).

Love your enemies.

Matthew 5:44

Resources continued ->>

Audio-visuals



A Force More Powerful—a documentary series illustrating how nonviolent action can succeed in overturning dictators and securing human rights. Six powerful stories—from Chile, Denmark, India, Poland, South Africa and the United States—show how nonviolence triumphed over oppression and brutality (DVD format, 3 hours total; each story is 30 minutes in length—English, French and Spanish), 2000.



Peacemaking—Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn explores the roots of anger and offers solutions to the violence we commit against ourselves and others—a personal testament to the spiritual and practical power of nonviolence (2 CDs, 2 hours total), 2002.



Peace by Peace: Women on the Frontlines celebrates women around the world who are standing up for peace, advocating restorative justice and educating future generations that violence is not the answer. Narrated by actress Jessica Lange, this film profiles women in Afghanistan, Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi and the United States who are building the foundations for sustainable peace (DVD format, 86 minutes, English), 2003.

Audio-visual materials may be borrowed free of charge from the Justice Resource Library (e-mail: mturgi@igc.org; phone: 574-284-5303; fax: 574-284-5596).

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