

Chapter 7

Promoting Nonviolence

In the year 2006, 29 armed conflicts took place in 25 countries throughout the world amplifying military spending at more than 1.2 trillion US dollars. 41.5% of these armed conflicts occurred in Africa and another 38% in Asia (Project Ploughshares, 2007). Up to 1,000 people die each day as a result of gun violence alone (IANSA, 2008).

The UN Millennium Project (2002–2006) wrote that every day, throughout the world, 800 million people go to bed hungry with a person dying of starvation every 3.6 seconds — the large majority of which are children under the age of 5.

Options in the Face of Violence

In the face of direct or structural violence, humans are generally faced with three response-options: one is to do nothing about it; another is to respond with violence; and last is to respond nonviolently.

To do nothing about oppression and repression encourages the perpetuation of the oppressive/repressive system. The failure to act may be due to fear, helplessness or indifference. To respond with violence perpetuates the cycle of hostility and carnage. Those who resort to counter-violence say that they are motivated by the desire to seek justice or to defend one's life or dignity. But alas, violence produces anger and bitterness on the part of the victims, setting off a dangerous cycle. Nonviolence, on the other hand, "seeks to create a situation that would liberate

victims from silence and helplessness to understanding and solidarity. It seeks to create a crisis that would force the adversary to open the door to negotiation (ML. King, Jr., 1963, cited in Holmes & Gan, 2005).

What is Nonviolence?

Nonviolence or ahimsa is the refusal to do harm to other humans as life is sacred and is an absolute value. It is anchored in the belief that humans have the potential to change.

AKKAPKA or Aksyon para sa Kapayapaan at Katarungan/Action for Peace and Justice (1987) defines it as “a principle, a way of life or tool for change that considers the human person as the highest created value which must not be destroyed. Its aim is to seek the truth and produce justice and the possibility for solidarity and reconciliation. Its aim is to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor through moral persuasion, pressure and forms of nonviolent direct action.”

What are Some Principles of Nonviolence?

Mohandas Gandhi, the man who led the people of India out of British subjugation held the following beliefs about nonviolence:

- As long as people accept exploitation, both exploiter and exploited will be entangled in injustice but once the exploited refuse to accept the relationship, refuse to cooperate with it, they are already free.
- Nonviolence and cowardice do not go together. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice.
- A person and his/her deeds are two distinct things. Hate the sin but not the sinner.
- If we fight back, we will become the vandal and they (oppressors) will become the law.
- An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind.

- Nonviolence is more powerful for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut to the voice of reason.
- Nonviolence demands that the means used should be as pure as the ends sought. Two wrongs will not make one right.

Martin Luther King, Jr., believed in the same principles Gandhi held on to. Below are additional beliefs MLK, Jr. held with regard to nonviolence:

- Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent but to win his friendship and understanding.
- Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
- Nonviolence thrives on love rather than hatred.
- Nonviolence requires willingness to suffer and amazing discipline in the midst of provocation.
- Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform.

To persuade people to believe in nonviolence is not easy because of tremendously oppressive situations such as extreme poverty and economic inequity, human rights violations and oppression. Such conditions foment hatred and anger on the part of the victims, sympathizers and people who work for social change making many of them willing to subscribe to armed struggle against people in power. Nelson Mandela even held at the height of his frustration against the apartheid system in South Africa that “force is the only language that imperialists can hear”.

Why Nonviolence?

It is both an ethical and moral choice. Major religious and philosophical traditions teach about respect for life. In Jainism, it is taught that a wise person “does not kill, nor cause others to kill, nor consent to the killings by others”. Lao Tzu, founder of Taoism taught that “weapons are instruments of evil and not of a good ruler”. In Buddhism, the precept “not to kill” is the foundation for all Buddhist action. Everyone is be-

lieved to have been born with a Buddha nature so “no one has the right to take the life of another”.

In Hinduism, ahimsa is considered the greatest gift and the highest teaching. In Islam, it is taught that anyone who “takes one life without justification, it is as if he has taken the lives of all humanity.” In Judaism, followers are urged “not to envy a man of violence and not choose any of his ways”. Christians are taught that those who use the sword are sooner or later destroyed by it.

Destruction is not the law of humans (Gandhi, 1931). Sigmund Freud, in 1920, wrote that aggression is an innate instinct which should be diverted away on to others to protect our intrapsychic stability. Similarly, Konrad Lorenz, in 1966, suggested that aggression serves an adaptive function in the evolutionary development where the fittest survives. But a group of scientists and scholars from around the world met in Seville, Spain in 1986, and wrote a statement countering the proposition that violence is inherent in human nature.

Below are some key points from the Seville Statement:

- War is not inevitable. There are cultures which have not engaged in wars for centuries.
- Violent behavior is not genetically programmed into our human nature. Genes provide a developmental potential that can be actualized only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment.
- Humans do not have a violent brain. There is nothing in our neuropsychological makeup that compels us to react violently. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized.
- Biology does not condemn humanity to war. Just as “wars begin in the minds of men,” so does peace settle there. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

The Seville Statement supports the theory put forward by Bandura, Ross & Ross in 1963 that aggression is not inherent but is learned in the process of socialization and, thus, may be unlearned. It is not in human nature to kill. Humans, under normal circumstances, prefer cooperation to aggressiveness (SIPRI-UNESCO, 1997).

Nonviolence is a practical choice. Tools and effects of violence are costly. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2009) reported that the world's annual military spending in military programs in 2008 is estimated at more than 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars. Forty-two percent of this was spent by the United States of America. In the Year 2000, when the world military expenditures was estimated at US\$800 billion annually, the World Game Institute reported that the world only needed US\$21 billion annually to provide shelter; US\$19 billion to eliminate starvation and malnutrition; US\$10 billion to provide, safe and clean water; and US\$5 billion to eliminate illiteracy—figures that are way smaller compared to the annual world military expenditures to solve the major concerns facing humanity (World Game Institute, as cited by the United Nations Department of Public Information).

Nonviolence works. The classic examples of success stories of nonviolent direct action would be those initiated by Mohandas Gandhi in India that led to the Hindu people's liberation from British occupation, and by Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States of America that resulted to the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which desegregated public accommodations everywhere in the nation, and the adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which allowed Black people to vote.

Below are other examples of nonviolent success stories:

- In 1986, the Philippines surprised the world with its version of nonviolent action. People were able to peacefully overthrow the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos in a nonviolent uprising they called "People Power". Nonviolent direct action activities were similarly employed by the Filipino people in 2001 to over-

throw Joseph Ejercito Estrada who was perceived to be an immoral and corrupt president.

- In 1988, the people of Chile succeeded in defeating the “yes” vote for Pinochet who ruled the country under military dictatorship for 15 years where thousands were tortured, executed and exiled; ruthless raids were conducted; citizens’ rights were limited; publications were closed down; and schools were put under surveillance. The goal of the Church to make Pinochet’s crimes known far and wide, via numerous nonviolent tactics, helped in gaining international attention to the Chilean peoples’ plight.
- The people of South Africa, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, succeeded in ending the apartheid policy which was penned in 1948 to “maintain white supremacy”. In 1989, then President Wilhelm de Klerk lifted ban on opposition groups, released political prisoners, and ended the state of emergency and restrictions of the press. In 1994, Nelson Mandela became the first Black President of South Africa.
- In Central America, Oscar Arias used the power of dialogue and nonviolent persuasion to convince the Presidents of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua to stop receiving military aid from the US and the USSR, among other things they agreed on as stipulated in the 1987 Peace Accords. Central America was the arena of the two superpowers’ Cold War. Arias’ nonviolent tactics helped peace to come to Central America where more than 200,000 casualties, most of whom were civilians, were killed at the height of the proxy wars (Arias, 2005).

What is Nonviolent Direct Action?

Gene Sharp (2005) has identified 198 methods of nonviolent action. Nonviolent action refers to efforts to persuade with action via methods of protest, noncooperation and intervention without using physical violence.

Below are some examples of Sharp on these methods, many of which were used time and again in various nonviolent struggles around the world:

Examples of Nonviolent Direct Action

Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion

— seeks to produce awareness of the dissent

- Petitions
- Banners, posters
- Lobbying
- Haunting officials
- Singing
- Marches
- Prayer rallies
- Mock funerals
- Vigils

Nonviolent noncooperation

— presents the opponent difficulties in maintaining the normal operation of the system

- Consumers' boycott
- General strike
- Civil disobedience

Nonviolent intervention

— challenges the opponent more directly

- sit-ins
- fasts

What are the Goals of Nonviolent Action?

MLK, Jr., in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" written to eight fellow clergymen from Alabama in 1963, wrote that nonviolent action seeks to dramatize the issue (of injustice) to put pressure on the adversary to

confront the issue. He also wrote that nonviolent direct action seeks to create a tension/crisis that would force the adversary to open the door to negotiation.

Additionally, nonviolent direct action seeks to create a situation that would liberate victims from silence and helplessness. This was evident, for example in Chile where people, for years, suffered in silence. Nonviolent direct action allowed them all — men, women and children — to participate in efforts to overthrow a dictatorial regime.

Nonviolent direct action also seeks to gain attention, and consequently, support from the larger community. People from around the world, for example, were bothered to see Hindus whipped to the ground by the army serving the British government without the former hitting back. Protests from the world community hastened the granting of independence by the British government to India.

What are the Steps in Doing Nonviolent Direct Action?

Different groups have different steps to doing nonviolent direct action. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change suggests several steps in doing nonviolent direct action which were derived from MLK, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail". The initial step is to collect data to ascertain that injustice exists. Research or the gathering of information is an important first step to any nonviolent struggle. The overthrow of former President Estrada in the Philippines, for example, was largely aided by revealing reports and photographs of his mansions, mistresses, and accumulated wealth published by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.

The second step is to raise consciousness of people about the issue. Education, whether, formal or informal, should aim at making victims understand their plight and believe that they could get out of their situation. Raising consciousness of "adversaries" about the presence of in-

justice would also help in getting sympathy from their ranks or could aid in their process of conversion.

The third step is to organize constituents and build coalitions. Knowledge of injustice will translate to change if groups are formed and prepared for nonviolent struggle. Organizing entails the analysis of the situation of injustice, making positions, and identifying responses. Nonviolent struggles in the Philippines saw the formation of various organizations which names varied from serious to humorous. Some of the groups formed, for example, to remove Joseph Estrada from power were TSE (*Tsugiin si Erap*), PARE (Peoples' Action to Remove Erap) and CODE RED (Resign Erap Dali). Coalitions are made up of organizations that have come together to broaden their reach and intensify their impact (Dionisio, 2005). In South Africa, for example, the struggle against apartheid intensified with the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1983.

Normally, the final step to nonviolent struggles would be the employment of the various methods of nonviolent action. In this stage, the creativity of organizers is unleashed. Some of the more prominent methods that Gandhi used were the burning of symbols (passes and cloth), boycotts, marches and public assemblies. The Civil Rights Movement in then-segregated America became eminent for its lunch counter sit-ins. Its leader MLK, Jr. used public assemblies to deliver powerful messages such as the celebrated "I Have a Dream" speech. Civil society groups in Chile took advantage of the power of television, and created infomercials to campaign for a "no" when Pinochet scheduled a plebiscite. People in the Philippines used the power of prayer to show their protest against the Marcos dictatorship.

The end goal of a nonviolent struggle is change. Gene Sharp (2005) identifies four mechanisms of change:

1. Conversion — the opponent comes around to a new point of view which embraces the end of the nonviolent actionists

2. Accommodation — the opponent is not converted but has concluded that it is best to agree on some or all of the demands

3. Nonviolent coercion — the opponent wants to continue with the struggle but is unable to do so because the sources of his power have been removed

4. Disintegration — the opponent's power has been simply dissolved

Teaching-Learning Ideas

Every day, situations of violence negatively impact on individuals. Increased aggressive behaviour, desensitization to war and conditioning about war's inevitability are effects of peoples' constant exposure to violent situations. Those who directly experience violence leave victims with physical, emotional and psychological trauma that result to anger, fear, and insecurity.

Teachers can do something to help learners appreciate nonviolence and promote it as an alternative response to violence. Here are some suggestions to help raise nonviolent persons:

- Be a good role model. Examine our own language, expressions and behavior when in frustrating situations. Examine our own forms of recreation and kinds of entertainment. Examine our own attitudes toward war. Learners are like sponge. They absorb what they hear and see.
- Decide with the students some rules for a peaceable classroom. Having a hand in its formulation, the students will feel more responsible to abide by them. Put up the list in a conspicuous place and refer to it when a rule is violated.
- Encourage more cooperative rather than competitive activities and play. Emphasize the joy of doing a classroom activity rather than being rewarded for the outcome.

- Consider peaceful techniques of conflict resolution over punitive action
- Encourage, reward or affirm good behavior
- Teach anger management techniques (e.g., breathe deeply, count to ten or say a little prayer when upset)
- Tell stories about cooperation
- Teach your students both love of country and concern for the whole human community. Narrow/extreme nationalism can influence the development of enemy thinking. The emphasis that we all belong to one human race will help stop learners from dividing humanity between “good guys” and “bad guys”
- Talk about peace heroes. War heroes are immortalized in the Social Studies curriculum. Balance the perspective by talking about Oscar Arias, Rosa Parks, Aung Sang Suu Kyi, Ninoy Aquino, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Wangari Maathai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Franz Jagerstatter, among others.
- Speak out and take action against bullying and other forms of violence in the classroom or on campus
- Watch films/documentaries on non-violent struggles (e.g., Gandhi) and invite students to reflect on the non-violent leader’s thoughts/teachings/principles.

Sample questions:

1. What principles of the nonviolent leader do you relate with the most? Why?
 2. Are these principles/teachings practical and still applicable in today’s world? Why or why not?
- Ask your students to research on the teachings of the major religions on nonviolence and respect for life. Ask them to make posters of their favorite teaching.

- Allow students to experience creating their own nonviolent campaign materials against war (e.g., posters, flyers, slogans, caricatures, poem, song, petition letters, and so on).
- Write a “letter to the editor” in class on a relevant political issue and submit good output to major dailies.
- Take your students to Congress and lobby on issues such as arms control and landmines’ ban.
- Case analysis and role play. Give situations of violence for students to analyze and challenge them to map out a nonviolent tactic plan. Ask them to act out one method that will effectively respond to the situation.
- Ask students to interview nonviolent advocates on their principles and advocacies.
- After studying the thoughts of religious and secular teachers and practitioners of nonviolence, make a list of quotes from these nonviolent teachers/thinkers/activists and ask students to find out from other students who said each quote. A sample is shown below.

Who Said What?

Directions: Find someone in class who knows the source of the following quotes. Ask this classmate to write his/her answer and to affix his/her signature on your list. You are not allowed to sign on your own list. A person may sign on your list only once.

1. We cannot get a rose through planting a noxious weed.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

2. Weapons are instruments of evil, not the instruments of a good ruler.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

3. Anger creates anger. He who kills will be killed.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

4. Peace will not be achieved by nationalistic posturing and arms

_____ races but by addressing fundamental human needs.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

5. The oppressor must be liberated as the oppressed for all had been robbed of humanity.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

6. The lack of concern for violence that happens in places far away from us is not nonviolence.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

7. The physical components of humans are more inclined toward what is peaceful, not what is hateful or violent.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

8. Violence as a way of achieving...justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert...it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

9. Two wrongs will not make one right...we reap exactly as we sow.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

10. Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you.

Answer: _____ Signature: _____

(Answer Key: 1. Gandhi, 2. Lao Tzu, 3. The Buddha, 4. Arias, 5. Mandela, 6. Dalai Lama, 7. Dalai Lama, 8. MLK, Jr., 9. Gandhi, 10. Jesus)

After the activity, ask the following questions:

- What does each quote tell us?
- Would these teachings be applicable in contemporary times?

Nonviolence is a practical and viable option because it challenges the very source of power. As Sharp (2005) asserts, when people in great

numbers withdraw their support and cooperation from government, power disintegrates. Additionally, the ongoing technological revolution has allowed citizens of the world to know of brutality experienced by people from around the world more easily. Hence, it is less difficult to mobilize people against injustice as international media and international non-government organizations are quick to respond. Governments are also generally more decisive in withholding economic privileges and imposing sanctions against brutal regimes. These and more, according to Ackerman and DuVall (2000) offer oppressed people from around the world more latitude in opposing injustice nonviolently.