**Keys to Making Change Nonviolently: Negotiating, Setting Goals, Getting Publicity, and Taking Initiative**

by Sanford Krolick and Betty Cannon

Gandhi called his philosophy Satyagraha. In the United States it has been called nonviolence, direct action, and civil disobedience.

The basic principle of nonviolence is to negotiate. The goal of a nonviolent movement is to establish an atmosphere that leads to a successful agreement. [This agreement then] establishes the basis to compromise in future conflicts.

The first step in a nonviolent campaign is for the resisters to define the minimum terms, or desired outcomes, that they would accept. Their minimum demands must be precise. Every effort should be made to ensure that everyone involved clearly understands. The terms should reflect the fundamental principle involved. . .

There are a few realistic as well as thoughtful reasons for demanding the minimum terms. First, A statement of maximum demands can put the opponent on the defensive. It could make the opponent feel that the resisters have mapped out one-sided and unrealistic a master plan against them. [The opponent] would then believe they would be forced to surrender rather than negotiate or reach an honorable agreement.

Second, too many demands may be confusing. Dissatisfaction and disunity can result if the leaders and participants have different priorities. Furthermore, the opponent might seek a solution to what he believes is the main point but which is not important to the resisters. More important, the opponent must clearly understand that the resisters cannot be “bought off” by minor or irrelevant agreement that does not recognize the fundamental principles involved.

[Another principle of nonviolence is to obtain] publicity about the movement and its objectives. [This] is essential for educating the opponent, the participants, and the public. Resisters should . . .use copying machine, newspapers, and national television. They must publish the objectives, the strategy, and the tactics of the campaign. Secrecy has no place in a nonviolent campaign. Secrecy serves only to destroy communications and invite suspicion.

[An overlooked approach] in a nonviolent campaign is to inform the opponent ahead of time about the precise course of any action that is planned. For example, [nonviolent participants should tell the opponent] the exact route a demonstration intends to follow. This is particularly important if confrontation is likely, since it reduces the possibility of violence through panic on either side. Of course, the authorities can prevent an action like this by arresting resisters ahead of time. However, plans that have been well publicized can create sympathy and attract support.

Publicity should be understood as a form of communication that lays the groundwork for agreement. . . Honesty and accuracy are critical. . . Insults from the opponent are best ignored. The movement will be judged by the honesty and fairness. The resisters’ communications should indicate that they are listening as well as talking. They must also be willing to admit a mistake or miscalculation. These steps must be continued throughout the movement until final agreement is reached. They are the basic tools for airing differences and settling disputes.

Such activities may evoke a violent response from authorities who hope to quell the movement quickly. They might also bring a sympathetic offer to negotiate. However, it is most likely they will bring no response at all. Most nonviolent groups are destroyed by neglect, not by action. When some groups are ignored, resisters become stifled and the movement dissolves.

Gandhi’s most important contribution to the philosophy of nonviolence was his insistence that the resisters must keep the initiative at all times. An opponent must be given an opportunity to consider the proposals, but he must not be allowed to ignore them. Gandhi fully understood that half the battle, or most difficult part, is to convince the opponent that he must deal with resisters. Even in using force the opponent becomes involved in a relationship with the movement. . .

. . .Direct action should be pursued only when all other alternatives, except violence, have been tried. The focus of the action must be carefully chosen. It must both demonstrate the problem and lead to a response from the opponent. Above all, it must allow for face saving. [The means that the opponent must be able to maintain a reputation or credibility.] While an action should be dramatic, it should not be presented in a way that calls for surrender from the opponent. A creatively negotiated settlement between equals remains the objective.

No matter what the response of the opponent may be, he must always be treated with the respect and dignity that the resisters are seeking for themselves. In actual practice, there are only a few times during a nonviolent campaign when direct action is truly necessary. During 25 years of almost continuous nonviolent activities, Gandhi used organized direct action fewer than 10 times.

The major techniques of direct action fall under two headings: noncooperation and civil disobedience. The techniques of noncooperation include mass rallies, strikes, picketing, and boycotts. . . .

The method of civil disobedience includes a deliberate violation of law. Civil disobedience is serious. This action guarantees a response from governmental authorities. Typically, arrests will be made. The ability of the movement to continue with disciplined resisters once the leaders are arrested is crucial. The aim is “to fill the jails.” This jams the courts while retaining public interest and sympathy. . .

In a direct action campaign it is essential that the resisters avoid using violence in any form. Nonviolence is not an end in itself it is a means of breaking the cycle of fear and repression. The purpose of nonviolence is to establish a basis for trust and negotiation. An action cannot be characterized as nonviolent if it is performed out of fear, for that may lead to submission. As Gandhi was fond of saying, the mouse does not exercise nonviolence in allowing the pussycat to eat him. Gandhi also insisted that when one saw no choices except to respond with violence or to submit, violence was the better choice because it afforded more self-respect than did cowardly submission. He emphasized the third alternative, nonviolent resistance, as a conscious choice.

Nonviolence is powerless unless it is coupled with a program to bring about change. A firm commitment to refuse to respond with violence or to submit to fear comes from strength, courage, and self-discipline. Nonviolence is truly the conquest of violence.

Source: Krolick, Sanford and Betty Cannon. “Gandhi in the Postmodern Age,” The Class of Nonviolence designed by Colman McCarthy. http://www.salsa.net/peace/conv/classofnonviolence12jan.pdf

**Nonviolent Noncooperation**

by Ed Hedemann

There are four standard responses to a conflict situation: ignore it and not become involved; give in and beg for mercy; get the hell out of there; and fight back violently. There is a fifth response, often ignored and little understood: nonviolence. . .

**History of Mass Nonviolent Action**

The use of nonviolence is as old as, or older than, recorded history—and so is violence. There have been numerous instances of people who have courageously and nonviolently refused to cooperate with injustice.

However, what is relatively new in the history of nonviolent action is the fusion of nonviolence with mass struggle. Organized warfare is 30 centuries old, but organized mass nonviolent action as we know it is less than one century old. [Mohandas Gandhi is largely responsible for] the synthesis of mass struggle with nonviolence [which began in 1906 with the] South African campaign for Indian rights.

Gandhi continued to experiment and develop mass nonviolence in the 28-year struggle for Indian independence from Great Britain. From the beginning of the first nationwide civil disobedience campaign in 1919 to independence in 1947, India was transformed from a splintered, downtrodden mass of people to a unified, self-respecting society largely through nonviolent action. This was not without incredible suffering at the hands of the British imperialists: 300,000 jailed (100,000 alone in the yearlong Salt campaign); hundreds killed; many more beaten, injured, and abused; and property confiscated.

Source: Ed, Hedemann. “Nonviolence” Active Nonviolence from *War Resisters League Organizers’ Manual*. www.trunign-the-tide.org