

CONTEMPORARY NONVIOLENT CAMPAIGNS

Familiarity with a range of contemporary nonviolent campaigns and social movements can give us:

- energy, inspiration, and some perspective on our own priorities and styles of working;
- practical ideas for new ways of organising and taking action;
- a sense of solidarity: knowledge that a lot else is happening and that we are not alone;
- a sense of our own place among – and contribution to – current movements for social change.

The following could be useful in training and working effectively alongside social change activists:

1. To know about the BREADTH and DIFFERENT TYPES of nonviolent activity:

There is a wide range of work currently being done to dismantle violent structures in people's thoughts, attitudes, and actions, and in organisations and states. The form the work takes varies in different contexts and is fed by widely varying traditions, customs, conditions and insights. Turning the Tide works with a correspondingly diverse range of groups. Some of these may not immediately identify themselves as having more than very general values in common; however, if common dynamics, patterns and obstacles are recognised, inspiration, experience and tools from across the range can be at their service

Nonviolent activity could be loosely classified as falling into the following types or areas:

a) Stemming the tide of violence - 'Holding measures' and 'fighting' for space

- Challenging violence
- Recovery from violence, which entails challenging internalised violence and the aftermath of violence

Examples include: Anti weapons campaigns (e.g. Trident Ploughshares); preventing perpetuation (healing/trauma work/AVP); recognising and working on internalised violence, both individual and structural (e.g. anti-racism work); using the law (campaigns to stop rights being eroded e.g. in establishing the right of Palestinians to build houses in Israeli residential areas); obstructing violence (e.g. obstructing forest destruction, Ploughshares actions); revealing misinformation (e.g. the work of American academic Noam Chomsky); campaigning for affordable anti aids drugs.

b) Facing the tensions and contradictions - standing firm in the unknown. Built on the faith and experience that an option other than violence is possible. Allowing all the parties in a situation to have a voice and developing the commitment, nerve, capacity and support to remain open and find a way forward when violence has been rejected as an option.

Examples include: mediation, reconciliation, consensus building, some direct action - confronting with the 'facts'.

c) Creating alternative behaviour to that which goes with the structurally violent set ups we've got. Proactive projects.

Examples include: Restorative justice; community empowerment programmes for health; nonviolent communication projects; alternative schooling; eco-villages; empowerment and awareness raising (e.g. Theatre of the Oppressed); participatory power and social roles – communities; just relations in economic exchange.

2. To be aware of and explore some current and emerging DEBATES/ PATTERNS/ DYNAMICS in the contemporary use of nonviolence:

- Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA) and “diversity of tactics” – should we/ how can we cooperate with empowered people whose methods/ politics might not be nonviolent?
- Has the peace movement got anything effective to offer in the face of the US-led 'war against terrorism'?
- Has nonviolence alone got what it takes to bring about change in global power structures, or is it inherently containable by the state?
- What are the patterns of reaction to nonviolent projects in general and NVDA in particular?
- What current perceptions of nonviolence are fostered in the media?
- What conditions affect nonviolent social change activism - what would be a 'force field ' for the use of active nonviolence in the current global context? (see tools section re. force field analysis)

3. To become familiar with some of the RECENT STRONG INFLUENCES on the use of nonviolence today, such as:

- Environmental activism - activism of visible groups in recent years and their methods – e.g. animal rights, Greenpeace, Earth First, Reclaim the Streets;
- Wider adoption of feminist practices and work in participatory power;
- Wider availability of the wisdom of indigenous peoples;
- Ecological discoveries, e.g. theories of inherent cooperation and interdependence of all life;
- Wider experience of diverse nonviolent interventions in war zones;
- Transitions of power - South Africa, Eastern Europe;
- Role of the market place;
- Rise of negotiation/mediation;
- Globalisation.

4. To know the RANGE OF PEOPLE AND CAMPAIGNS USING NONVIOLENCE:

Coalitions and networks, including:

religious, farmers, youth, scientists (eg International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War), medical workers, retired generals, indigenous peoples, community artists, etc.

Key resources

From Kosov@ to Seattle - War Resisters International report on the role for nonviolent direct action now. Discussions and case studies from activists around the world exploring current themes and possibilities. 2000. 15p

Peace News - Nonviolence and Social Empowerment issue, June – August, 2000 - with articles by activists from Croatia, Zimbabwe, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, India, the UK and more – case studies and exploration of key issues. Soon to be a full book from War Resisters International.

DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain edited by George McKay, Verso, 1998. A collection of in-depth and reflective articles by activists and other key figures in the 'Do It Yourself' protest culture, telling their own stories and histories: video activists, anti-roads protestors, Earth Firsters, The Land is Ours campaigners, and the politics of free parties, discos and dancing. George MacKay teaches at the University of Central Lancashire; his previous books include *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (also published by Verso).

Additional Resources:

Nonviolent Social Movements – a Geographical Perspective by Stephen Zunes, Lester R Kuntz and Sarah Beth Asher, Blackwell, 1999 (321 pages). A book for dipping into and browsing through. There are two chapters on theory by Kenneth Boulding and Pam McAllister, followed by essays on the use of active nonviolence in the Middle East, Europe, Asia (Philippines, Thailand, Burma), Africa (South Africa and the Ogoni in Nigeria), Latin America and North America. Not all strictly contemporary, but good to challenge our tendencies toward 'northern/ western centrality'.

Beyond Violence and Nonviolence, article by Starhawk, marking a shift by one of the most visible and articulate activists and theorists of nonviolence to encompassing cooperation with direct activists who will use violence. *Peace News*, Sept 2001 (2 pp)

Pacifism as Pathology by Ward Churchill, (updated '96), Arbieter Ring Publishing. A long essay, containing influential criticism of nonviolence as a strategy for change that has currently swung the fluffies/ spikies debate in favour of the spikies in British street action. See also, by way of reply, George Lakey, *Mass Action Since Seattle: 7 Ways to Make our Protests More Powerful* (www.TrainingforChange.org); and *A Praxis of Pacifism* by Beth Preheim (Pathfinder, Winter 2001).

The Spun, Nov. 2001 - Reclaim the streets collective publication following Sept 11th 2001; and *Peoples Global Action*, worldwide resistance round-up Feb 2000 – both give a strong flavour of the energy, humour, creativity, diversity of world wide action. Contain analysis, reports, challenges, photos.

See also back issues of the journals *Peace News*, *Nonviolent Activist* and *Nonviolent Action*

Internet articles The following, together with Starhawk's article above, cover main points of the current nonviolence/diversity of tactics debate:

Kaufmann: *NV and Diversity*, May 2001 – written in review of the Quebec protests held in April 2000: a good synopsis of the radicalisation of the Movement.

Glick: *On Winning Hearts and Minds* – a powerful and clear different perspective.

Websites

War Resisters International - Nonviolent Social Empowerment: essays by activists on ways forward for nonviolent change. A mix of analysis and lessons from their experience and case studies. <http://www.gn.apc.org/warresisters>

NonViolence International - www.members.tripod.com/nviusa

SchNEWS - weekly newsheet of UK protest - www.schnews.org.uk

<http://www.free-radical.org> - 'the new unrest' reported and commented

www.reclaimthestreets.net

People's Global Action - www.agp.org

Direct Action Media Network - North American Independent activist news coverage including downloadable videos. <http://www.damn.tao.ca>

Case Studies

Fight For the Forest by Chico Mendes, Latin American Bureau, 1989 . A short, vivid, straightforward account of the nonviolent struggle of Brazilian rubber tappers to save their livelihoods and the forest. Mendes is unpretentious, determined, and deeply inclusive. Here is a great example of pragmatic movement building: step by step, with clear vision, wise comprehension of tactics, patient building of capacity and of support at home and abroad, and the imagining and communicating of alternatives. It demonstrates the role of allies and the ways in which the interests of apparently opposed sectors of societies are interconnected and can be used.

Battle for the Trees: 3 months of responsible ancestry by Merrick, godhaven ink, 1996. An ecowarrior's account of vitality, skill, strategy and creativity in the daily life of a tree protest.

Croatia (offprint) by Sophie Reynolds. An account showing how prevailing conditions determine what forms of nonviolence can arise. Identifies factors required for confrontational nonviolent direct action to be effective. 6p. 2000

Conscientious Objection – the anti-conscription struggle in Spain: perseverance over time, showing the role of changing external forces <http://www.gn.apc.org/warresisters>

Jorgen Johansen – account of a campaign in Norway which aimed to stop construction of new power stations by organising, training and threat of civil disobedience.
<http://www.gn.apc.org/warresisters>

Festival of the Forest – article in *Seeds of Peace* May 2000. Karen tribe campaign to save forest in Thailand. 2p. Another “face of nvda” story of the tools used by the Karen and example of the place for ceremony in the social change process.

A Cow for Hillary by Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, (offprint from the web) – article exploring economic justice and the global economy from below, as illuminated by a conversation between Hillary Clinton and women in a Bangladeshi village.

Videos

Nonviolence for a Change – (25 minutes). Turning the Tide’s very own video, with accompanying mini study pack. Follows three campaigners and explores their visions of nonviolence. Key questions are raised about the effectiveness and scope of active nonviolence. Produced by JustUs Productions, Friends Meeting House, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW; justus@gn.apc.org

Celtic Enemy Undercurrents 5 (15 minutes). Story of a campaign against open-cast mining, shows trust-building and empowerment of locals by 'outsiders'; ecowarriors and Welsh villagers cooperate against a mining corporation. www.undercurrents.org

The Big Blockade – 25 minute video on the Trident Ploughshares campaign. With interviews and action shots, it follows the experiences of members of Stirling CND at the blockade of Faslane nuclear submarine base on 12th February, 2000. A Jeely Peace production, available from Scottish CND (15 Barrland St. Glasgow G41 1QH; www.cndscot.dial.pipex.com)

Landscape of Memory – four documentary videos about truth and reconciliation in Southern Africa (Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe). Produced by South African Communications for Development in 1999 (reviewed in Peace News September – November 2000).