

HISTORY OF NONVIOLENT CAMPAIGNS AND MOVEMENTS

Knowledge of previous nonviolent campaigns and social movements can give us:-

- a sense of the possibilities, discipline and creative scope of nonviolence;
- a framework of reference, a place to stand which gives perspective on what Resource People and other nonviolent activists are attempting to do - and may also give hope and encouragement (knowing that others have done this as well, some of them very effectively);
- an opportunity to stop us re-inventing the wheel!

We suggest the following about the history of nonviolence could be useful in training and working effectively alongside social change activists:-

1. to have awareness of the 'lineage' of nonviolence: key practitioners/articulators over time of the philosophy, vision and power dynamics of active nonviolence;
2. to have read (or at least read or seen a video) about some of the key writings and ideas of nonviolent activist or theorists, including Gandhi and Martin Luther King;
3. to have a sense of the broad sweep and wide variety of nonviolent struggle over time and across cultures.
4. to have heard or read about examples of 'the history of peace' – living co-operatively, creatively and self-reliantly (i.e. the positive side of nonviolent activism, building alternatives, that Gandhi called 'constructive programme')
5. to have heard or read - and be able to tell - some good stories from nonviolent campaigns in the past, illustrating particular principles or tactics or examples of good and bad practice;
6. to have knowledge of at least one historic nonviolent campaign or movement in greater depth.

Key resources:

A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict by Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall, St. Martin's Press, 2001. A double video set of case studies, each focusing on a particular campaign within the broader movement (the Indian independence struggle, the US civil rights movement, Denmark under Nazi occupation, resistance to Pinochet in Chile, Solidarnosc in Poland, and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa). The accompanying book (544 pages) has additional case study material and comments on key points of strategy. "When a book is so ambitious it is easy to find fault," writes

Howard Clark in Peace News (June-August 2001). “[There is] plenty to criticise – from a superficial to a fundamental level – but much more to enjoy and learn from.”

War Resisters League Diary 2002 - for flicking through; contains 52 stories of nonviolent actions/campaigns through history.

Additional resources:

Letter from a Birmingham Jail essay by Martin Luther King Jr. A key text, to be found in most Martin Luther King anthologies, in which the civil rights leader answers those critics who accuse the nonviolent movement of stirring up trouble and causing violence when everything was ‘peaceful’ before.

Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction by Bikhū Parekh, OUP, Oxford, 1997 – a useful modern – and brief – account of the life and work of this pioneer of active nonviolence. See also the film *Gandhi*, made in the early 1980’s by Richard Attenborough.

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory (the story of Rosa Parks) by Douglas Brinkley, Phoenix, 2000 A readable biography, based on first-hand interviews and research, that puts Rosa Parks’ life – and the act of defiance which sparked the 1955/6 Montgomery bus boycott – in its wider context.

Mississippi Burning - excellent feature film about the early civil rights movement in the United States

You Can't Kill the Spirit (1988) and *This River of Courage* (1991) by Pam McCallister, New Society Publishers – inspiring and readable (short) accounts of women's nonviolent campaigns/ actions.

Power of the People (US American and out of print - but the TTT library has it). This is a picture book history of North American nonviolent movements, with potted biographies of key people and campaigns. A revelation!

Out of the Shadows: Women, Resistance and Politics in South America by Jo Fisher, Latin America Bureau, 1993. Self-help groups and grassroots feminism in Chile, trade unionists in Uruguay, peasant women in Paraguay, Mothers of the Disappeared and struggles for community health projects in Argentina – a lot of ‘invisible history’ here.

Civil Resistance by Michael Randle, Fontana, 1994. A history of people power nonviolence and its applicability to social defence, informed by a study of the dramatic Eastern European revolutions of 1989. Makes a good, well informed and easy to read case for civil resistance as having an important and necessary place in the preservation of basic human rights and democracy. Locates us as nonviolent activists in a journey, showing the evolution of conditions and attitudes we face and share. Provides persuasive, inspiring and ‘reasonable’ arguments for the use of coercive nonviolent direct action, addressing common objections to its validity and legality.

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.

Larzac by Roger Rawlinson, William Sessions, 1996. Case study of a ten-year campaign to reverse the French government's decision to expand a military base on an ecologically fragile plateau in Southern France – a creative mix of the principled nonviolence of the Community of the Ark (Lanza del Vasto), trade union and political organising techniques and 'plain peasant common sense'.

Shoulder to Shoulder by Midge MacKenzie, NY, 1975, 1988. A documentary/ picture book of the women's suffrage struggle.

A Man to Match his Mountains: Badshah Khan, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam by Easwaran Edanath, Nilgiri Press, USA, 1984. This is the story of a fighter from the Pathans of the Khyber Pass who turned to nonviolence during the Indian independence movement.