

THEORY AND STRATEGY: How, Why, And When Nonviolence Works

Familiarity with some of the theories which seek to explain how nonviolence works and how social change happens can offer us:

- New perspectives and challenging questions;
- Frameworks for thinking about strategy and considering the effectiveness of our actions;
- Help in coming clear about what level of social change we seek, and what we might expect to happen when we act to bring that about;
- Insights into the ways in which those involved in conflict with us might react to our actions and goals.

The following aspects of theory and strategic thinking about nonviolence could be useful in training/ working effectively alongside social change activists:

1. To be familiar with the understanding of power as a function of relationship (Gene Sharp), and with the concepts of 'power over', 'power to' and 'power with' (Joanna Macy)
2. To have encountered, and be able to explain, some of the theoretical concepts about how nonviolence works (including, eg coercion, persuasion, conversion, 'moral jujitsu').
3. To have had at least a first look at the classic repertoire of nonviolent methods of protest, non-cooperation and intervention (Gene Sharp et al). Also to have encountered and begun to explore Gandhi's concept of 'constructive programme' (building alternative structures/ institutions/ ways of behaving) as an integral part of any nonviolent campaign or movement.
4. To have encountered the paradigms and theories about social change and activism developed by Movement for a New Society (George Lakey, Bill Moyer) - including the distinction between revolutionary and reformist change and the concept of revolutionary reform.
5. To have encountered some tools for analysis, vision and strategy-building and to have applied these to a specific campaign or movement, either contemporary (including something we ourselves are involved in) or historical.
6. To have encountered theories of social change that work with concepts such as the tao of leadership, the leader as martial artist, and the tao of physics. These suggest that recurring cycles, the rise and fall of energy, and shifts in smaller (heart) as well as larger dynamics are vital to our understanding of social change and needed to make work in the political realm bear fruit.

Key resources:

Three 'overview' articles from different strands of nonviolent activism from the early 80's to the present:

- *War Resisters League Organizer's Manual* - Ed Hedeman's introductory article on nonviolence, War Resisters League, New York, 1981; Pp. 11 – 15
- *Developing Strategies to Abolish War* by Joanne Sheehan (offprint from the web)
- *Nonviolence and Social Empowerment* (offprint from the web), an article from War Resisters International, soon to be part of a longer book.

Speaking our Peace: Sharing Skills with Peace Activists, one of five manuals based on the experience of the Quaker Peace Action Caravan, published by Quaker Peace & Service, 1988. The section on George Lakey's spiral model of social change (pp. 31-37) gives a brief summary of a useful framework for thinking about broad strategic stages in a revolutionary nonviolent movement.

Also two handouts from longer books (see *additional resources*, below):

- *198 nonviolent tactics* by Gene Sharp; all the ways of taking nonviolent action you ever thought of, and more besides...
- *Movement Action Plan* by Bill Moyer; more about stages in a campaign/movement

Additional resources:

Powerful Peacemaking by George Lakey, New Society Publishers, 1987. A full presentation of Lakey's five-stage model of nonviolent social change, with examples from a wide range of struggles around the world.

Manual for Action by Martin Jelfs, (revised and edited by Sandy Merritt), published by the Action Resources Group in London in 1982, but now, alas, out of print. Some believe this is the best brief organiser's manual ever published in the UK, with sections on Vision, Strategy and Tactics as well as working effectively in groups.

Doing Democracy: the MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements by Bill Moyer, New Society Publishers, 2001. An updated and expanded version of the 8-stage model in the handout above, with useful case studies as illustration.

The Politics of Nonviolent Action by Gene Sharp, Porter Sargent, 1973. Part One of this trilogy, *Power and Struggle*, gives a useful overview of the theory of power which underlies much of the strategic thinking on nonviolence. See

especially Chapter 2: *Nonviolent Action: an Active Technique of Struggle* (pp. 63–102).

The Leader as Martial Artist, An Introduction to Deep Democracy by Arnold Mindell, Harper Collins, 1992. Very skilled understanding of the obstacles to change and ways to work with them. This is an inspiring, brilliant exposition of the theory and practice of conflict and peace making by hugely experienced practitioner, mediator, and psychologist. There is a depth of understanding of the role of art, myth, symbol, history as well as fear, cycles of violence and current social political factors in war, conflict and change. It is very useable, clear, and thought provoking, and introduces useful concepts such as 'deep democracy' or 'world work'.

Warriors of the Heart by Danaan Parry, Earthstewards Network, 1997. Compelling, challenging tool book from international mediator and facilitator of citizens' groups across the world and proponent of citizens' diplomacy e.g. US/ USSR citizens' peacemaking during cold war; it addresses the role of gender in conflict; role of ritual, tools, exercises.

The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk, Thorsons, 1997/9 (first edition by Bantam, 1993). A dramatic, inspiring novel in which the contents of all the Turning the Tide taster sheets get practised and challenged and chewed upon! Encompassing struggles that a nonviolent society has, nonviolence training, challenges to it when the pressure is on, i.e. in the face of violent oppression, fear, limitations, change. There's very solid stuff in this so skip the more imaginative bits if they put you off.

The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense, a Gandhian Approach by Robert Burrowes, University of New York Press, 1996. This is one which has been highly recommended to us by more than one activist source which we trust.