



INDEPENDENT STUDY GUIDE:

THE SEARCH FOR A NONVIOLENT FUTURE:

By Michael Nagler

INTRODUCTION

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 sent many of us reeling, searching for a way to quickly make sense of the world in a way we had never been challenged to do. As the call for war escalated, we found ourselves awash in a sea of messages—all finely crafted to teach us the “logic of war”. Any one of us could articulate why we had to bomb Afghanistan. After all, terrorism had to be stopped. Freedom had to be protected. But something didn’t feel right. Why weren’t we asking the other questions? What could be going on in the world that could make so many people hate us? What kind of desperation exists in other communities that makes them fertile ground for terrorist recruitment? And what could possibly make it OK for us to bomb innocent Afghans? Are there alternatives to war? And what can *we* do, right now, right here?

Some of us felt that the first step was to learn more about alternatives, and in particular, to learn about the history and science of nonviolence. We decided to start a Nonviolence Study Circle. We wanted to learn the “logic of peace”.

In early 2001, Professor Michael Nagler published his long-awaited book on nonviolence, *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*. It was just the tool we needed to help guide our study. As we started studying the topic of nonviolence, we watched the profound changes happening with everyone involved. Some people changed the way they related with their families. Others looked at their activism and community service in a new light. And many started to formalize their spiritual practices in order to take on the very important, personal, and *hard* work of inner transformation—of erasing our own violence.

We wanted to share this experience with many others. In order to facilitate this sharing, we have put together a study guide to be used with Professor Nagler’s book. We want to provide just enough structure to support anyone who wants to start their own nonviolence study circle. It’s just a start, and we welcome input. Feel free to email us with feedback—what you found helpful, what would make it better. We also would love to hear how your circle is going. You can reach us at info@mettacenter.org

Use this guide in whatever way works best for you. Do pay attention to the design of your group. Think about what form of leadership you want, the format of your meetings, facilitation style, and most important—how to use this group experience as a way of practicing being nonviolent.

The chapter synopsis is intended to help the facilitator guide the group discussion of the chapter and to ensure that the key concepts are covered. The discussion questions are meant to be used after this chapter discussion, as a way to see how we can relate these new concepts directly to our daily life experiences. The practice exercises can be used as “homework” if you want to have assignments between meetings (in addition to reading the book).

Our study circle is meeting once a month for two hours. This is still an experiment, and we may change the length and frequency of meetings as we learn more.

We hope that you will benefit from this course of study as much as we have. For we believe that the ugly business of war cannot end through violent means. It will only end when we have all engaged in

the kind of cultural revolution that values love-for-all, in that eternal search to build what Dr. King called the “beloved community”.

This is a start. Enjoy!
With love and visions of peace,
The Menlo Park Nonviolence Study Circle

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WARM-UP SESSION

The study of nonviolence challenges our basic beliefs and assumptions about life. For those who have never been exposed to nonviolence concepts and principles, the experience can be somewhat overwhelming to absorb.

We found it useful to have a warm-up session before starting the formal study of nonviolence using Michael Nagler’s book. It helps tremendously to get a grounding in the principles that underlie nonviolence, as well as to practice some new ways of thinking.

The best way to get grounded in nonviolence principles is to read [Gandhi the Man: the Story of his Transformation](#) by Eknath Easwaran. Then have a session with your group to discuss the book.

If you want to have a simple session, pose these two questions for discussion:

1. What strikes you about Gandhi as a man, and about his life?
2. What underlying principles and philosophy drove Gandhi’s approach?

If your group would like a more in-depth discussion of this book, feel free to download the *Gandhi the Man: the Story of his Transformation* study guide ([click here to download](#)) and use it to direct your study.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Michael Nagler’s book, *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, is the culmination of three decades of teaching, practicing, and reflecting upon nonviolence. Professor Nagler begins with the movement’s roots in the writings of Gandhi, and traces its legacy through the struggle against Fascism, against oppression in China and Latin America, and in the American civil rights movement, as well as ethnic conflicts in Africa and Bosnia. The book recounts a hidden history of successful exercise of the principles of nonviolence, arguing that it has proven its effectiveness against force and social injustice wherever it has been correctly understood and applied. It then explores these principles in the context of contemporary American society.

In addition to tracing the global history of nonviolence, Professor Nagler discusses its personal, spiritual side, drawing upon the experience of Gandhi and other activists to show that the shift to nonviolence begins with a shift in the individual and a change in how one views the world. He then demonstrates how, from changes in the individual, changes in the larger community follow.

The Search for a Nonviolent Future updates the tradition of nonviolence and brings it to a new level of sophistication. It challenges readers’ assumptions about the workings of power in their homes, communities, and in the larger political arena. And it is full of Michael Nagler’s warmth, humor, and gift for telling a story.

CHAPTER 1

HARD QUESTIONS, HARD ANSWERS

This chapter encourages us to re-frame the way we look at violence. Instead of trying to understand each separate instance of violence, we are asked to look deeper and explore the root cause of violent incidents. The right questions to ask, then, are:

- What is violence?
- Why is it getting worse?
- How do we make it stop?

It is proposed that hate is the underlying problem, and that if we could control hate, then all manifestations of hate (that is, violence) would subside. *Since the underlying cause of violence is hate, we could fix the problem if we had a way to turn hate into something else.*

The example of an experiment with children, where one group was encouraged to be aggressive and the other to be cooperative, is used to challenge the assumption of innate aggression in humans. The experiment proves that we have the capacity for good *or* evil in us, and that we actually have control over the inner qualities we cultivate. In short, *peace could simply be a matter of training.*

Nelson Mandela’s story is used to illustrate the transformation of a young man with plenty of anger and defiance into a man big enough to extend generosity and reconciliation to his “enemy”. This story demonstrates that the capacity to stand up to a bully and the capacity not to act like one are closely connected. Mandela’s story supports Gandhi’s assertion that there is hope for a violent man to become nonviolent, but not for a coward. In nonviolent logic, this makes perfect sense; what we’re seeing is the same courage and strength, put to better use.

This puts to rest one myth about nonviolence—that it is the path of the weak. In fact, *nonviolence can only be practiced by the most courageous.* And it can be practiced by individuals, drawing on the “Power of One”.

The recipe for successful nonviolence is:

- Spirit
- A sense of legitimacy (that one’s cause is just)
- The willingness to sacrifice; if necessary to lay down your life

In this chapter, we see that hate is the root cause of all violence, that nonviolence is a proactive, long-term approach to problem-solving (instead of a reactive, short-term approach), and that individuals possess the power to create a nonviolent culture through their own inner struggle to eliminate feelings of hate, and to strive for something better in themselves—tapping into the potential that exists in all.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you believe about human nature? What does your personal experience (that is, the “evidence”) say about this?
2. Have you ever experienced a situation where one person’s behavior had a marked impact (positive or negative) on the culture of the group? Where one person’s behavior could turn around a stressful, hostile situation?
3. What happens when you “non-cooperate” with gossip?
4. Can you describe a difficult situation where you were able to control your initial angry reaction and respond with kindness instead? What happened?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. The next time you are with a particularly difficult person, think of all the good things you can about that person. Smile during all your interactions with that person and extend your friendship. See what happens.
2. Spend a day paying attention to your thoughts. Take an inventory of how many times you have a negative thought about something or someone.
3. Repeat a positive thought in your mind each time you see yourself heading down a negative thought path (some people use a mantram, other people practice a “conscious breathing”).

CHAPTER 2 HOPE IN DARK TIMES

In this chapter we start to discover the “science” of nonviolence—what it is, and how a nonviolent dynamic works. We begin to look at the components of this nonviolent dynamic, explore new ways to look at violence, clarify the definitions of what we mean by violence and nonviolence, and put forward a theory of how nonviolence works.

Key questions in this chapter are:

- What kinds of power are at work in a nonviolent dynamic?
- How can we look at violence, in order to understand how to eliminate it?
- What exactly do we mean by violence and nonviolence?
- How does the nonviolent dynamic work?

WHAT KINDS OF POWER ARE AT WORK IN A NONVIOLENT DYNAMIC?

Kenneth Boulding teaches us that we can use three kinds of power to influence those around us.

- **Threat power**—do something I want or I’ll do something you don’t want.
- **Exchange power**—give me something I want and I’ll give you something you want.
- **Integrative power**—I’m going to do what I believe is right, and we will end up closer.

The application of integrative power (which is the least studied and least understood power) is what drives the fundamental dynamic in a nonviolent response to any situation. Why does this work? It works because this power responds to one of the strongest human needs—the need for integration (acceptance, community, fellowship).

Nonviolence is the science of appealing to that need.

HOW CAN WE LOOK AT VIOLENCE, IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO ELIMINATE IT?

We can view violence through three lenses, or models:

- **The Moral Model**—violence is a sin or crime, the perpetrator is a sinner or criminal, and we have to seek blame rather than cause which leads to scapegoating; that is, dehumanization.
- **The Medical Model**—violence is a disease, the perpetrator is a patient, a person in trouble, and we shift our attention to prevention.
- **The Education Model**—violence is not so much a sin or a disease, but a kind of ignorance, which makes it easy to see that wisdom and love are the solution.

It is proposed that the Education Model may be the most useful. Ignorance can be cured, and we can reverse negative conditioning. *Love plays some kind of role in this process.*

WHAT EXACTLY DO WE MEAN BY VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE?

Violence, as we define it for this analysis, is a human phenomenon; that is, not the natural and sustainable kind that we find in nature, but the brutal and out-of-balance kind that happens when we humans prey on each other. A fundamental characteristic of this kind of violence is the intention to injure. This intention runs counter to our very nature as humans to seek bonding with others. Therefore, at a deep level, whoever commits real violence (that is, nurses an intention to harm someone) suffers from the very intention, never mind the consequences of any resultant action. Given the importance of intention, we see that violence arises in the mind.

Nonviolence, on the other hand, is *not* passive resistance. It is an active force that can be cultivated, that is fundamental to human nature. Nonviolence is the successful conversion of a potentially destructive drive.

So misleading are the terms “nonviolence” and “passive resistance” that Gandhi invented a new word—Satyagraha, or “soul force”—which literally means “clinging to truth”, drawing on the positive power that is inherent in human nature. It is not the weapon of the weak, but the weapon of the strong, for there is a kind of strength that does not come from numbers or from weapons. It is in favor of this strength, which some think is even greater, that the satyagrahi (a practitioner of Satyagraha) renounces the use of physical force, voluntarily and on principle.

Unfortunately, we tend to see violence more than nonviolence, even though we are surrounded by evidence of the continual existence of nonviolence. Learning to see nonviolence as a natural state of human existence (that is, re-educating ourselves) is critical to unleashing the power of nonviolence.

HOW DOES THE NONVIOLENT DYNAMIC WORK?

This chapter tells us the story of Karen Ridd who walked back into Guatemalan captivity rather than leave her friend alone. We see that her acts of courage and love awakened, or “re-humanized”, the souls of the Guatemalan soldiers. By refusing to see them as anything less than human beings, she managed to move their hearts. This force of “moving the heart” is qualitatively different from merely forcing others by some form of punishment or sanction. Since the opponent has changed willingly, he or she is not looking for an opportunity to get back at you. When Satyagraha works it doesn’t just change one party’s position, it changes the *relationship* between parties. Once they have seen the situation from our point of view, those who once were our opponents move closer to us in spirit. This is integrative power.

The self-sacrificing devotion that Karen had for her friend and her cause was so strong that it overcame her fear for her own life. And this force, for which “love” seems to be the best term available, is always there in human consciousness. This force was so strong that it was able to move the hearts of soldiers who moments before were prepared to torture and kill Karen and her friend.

So nonviolence is law, not luck. It is a force grounded in nature, exemplified in history. The harnessing of the power of this law is what makes nonviolence work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of power (threat, exchange, or integrative) do you use in your work life? Your personal life?
2. In cases where you use threat power or exchange power, what would be an integrative power approach?
3. Have you ever witnessed (or been part of) a situation where someone’s attitude and behavior were transformed? What happened, and what was at the root of that transformation?
4. Have you ever been so devoted to another being that their welfare meant more to you than your own? What would it take to expand this level of devotion to others, in progressively wider circles?

5. What do you believe about the nature of human nature? How does this affect the way you behave in the world?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Identify a particularly challenging situation with a co-worker, friend, or family member. How can you repair or strengthen your relationship through the use of integrative power? How might you act in order to facilitate a nonviolent dynamic?
2. Identify a manager who seems to be really good at motivating people to work hard and with joy—even people who don't report to him/her. Interview them and analyze how they use the three kinds of power. What makes them effective?
3. Look at the news. How many assumptions about the nature of violence and the nonexistence of nonviolence can you spot? How would **you** write the story, or what stories would you include that the media didn't report?
4. If you were in charge of a “nonviolence education project”, what would it look like?

CHAPTER 3

NO POWER TO DESCRIBE

In this chapter we look at the result of converting powerful negative forces (such as fear, anger, and hatred) into positive action—the peak experience. We answer three critical questions:

- What is a peak experience?
- How does a perfectly ordinary person incorporate nonviolence into his/her daily life?
- Can we just expect a courageous response in times of serious emotional crisis or must we train ourselves for it?

WHAT IS A PEAK EXPERIENCE?

A peak experience is that intense feeling throughout our entire system when everything comes into acutely sharp focus on all levels—physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. There is “an exhilarating sense of purpose”. By studying many examples (from Gandhi, the leader, to Montana, the football quarterback, to Egan, the octogenarian activist), we learn that intense emotional reaction can be channeled into clear and clarifying acts of courage. A peak experience through nonviolence manifests a twofold benefit: it is supremely healthy (an alternative between repression and expression) and it is joyful (it lines up with the purpose of life). There is a laser-sharp focus on the vision, a belief that one person can indeed make a difference, and that “kindness begets kindness, visions communicate, moods affect moods.”

HOW DOES A PERFECTLY ORDINARY PERSON INCORPORATE NONVIOLENCE INTO HIS/HER DAILY LIFE?

The short answer: it's both an outside and inside job.

How do we do it from the outside? We model from visionary leaders who have put the principles of nonviolence into action. We attempt to understand the teachings of those who have practiced nonviolence. We embrace the concept of “unity of life” and follow the moral guidelines of a nonviolent value system. Finally, we practice living a life of nonviolence both verbally and non-verbally. By daily practice, roots take hold deeper and deeper into our daily actions.

And what about the inside job? The greatest tool for the inside job may be meditation. Meditation is the practice of getting the mind under control. Imagine how that discipline of singular focus could provide an advantage during times of violence. Michael Nagler boldly states, “one pointed attention is the psychological key to nonviolence” while the Dalai Lama describes meditation as “internal disarmament”. An individual’s integrative harmony will have a ripple effect on those around, like a pebble dropped into the water. Imagine the power of a group with that purposeful resolve and inner peace.

CAN WE JUST EXPECT A COURAGEOUS RESPONSE IN TIMES OF SERIOUS EMOTIONAL CRISIS OR MUST WE TRAIN OURSELVES FOR IT?

In very simple terms, like muscle memory, the more we practice, the stronger our resolve becomes. Although we may experience sudden, unexpected violence (for example, a mugging), the advanced preparation of daily practice (meditative singular focus, practicing nonviolence, having positive regard for all individuals) will likely provide a foundation to fall back on during an emotional challenge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe a peak experience you have had. What were the feelings? How do you relate your peak experience with the resolve of the peace movement?
2. Do you believe that one person truly can make a difference? Think of examples.
3. What do you think is the most effective way for you to practice daily nonviolence?
4. What are the primary benefits of meditation?
5. Describe the person you would like to be one year from now, five years from now, and even by the time you pass from this life.
6. We live in a violent society. Where do you think you can make the biggest impact on reducing that violence?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Think about an individual you hold in the highest positive regard. Make a list of the traits this person possesses. How closely is that list connected with your personal vision of yourself?
2. Role play: Describe an incident when you had complete control of your anger. What was said? Ask a partner to play you and you take on the role of the other individual. What did you learn from the experience?
3. Collage: What brings you peace? Quickly go through five magazines and cut out pictures that perfectly demonstrate being centered. Put the collage together.
4. Journal for one day: On one single day track your thought patterns. Start noticing your tendencies. As you talk with an individual, how many times does a negative word about someone come up? Positive word? Sarcasm?
5. Rewrite history: Think about a particular interaction where you would like to rewrite history. Partner up. Try it one way; try it another way.
6. The Surprise: Describe a time when you had an impression of someone from a distance and, once you got to know him/her, found you were completely off-base.
7. Coffee Invitation: Is there a neighbor you have never really talked to? Start your nonviolence practice by taking a step toward getting to know your neighbor.

CHAPTER 4

“WORK” VERSUS WORK

Does violence work? Does nonviolence work?

Well, that might depend on how “work” is defined. When we think about whether or not something worked, it may be important to move from a shorter- to longer-term view. It may also be important to use a broader lens that includes the collateral aspects of both violent and nonviolent outcomes.

In this chapter, “work” relates to the immediate outcome of a violent or nonviolent action as well as the adherence of the outcome to the original intention of the action. In contrast, the term work refers to the longer-term results and broader outcomes of that action.

DOES VIOLENCE WORK?

First, let’s focus on violence. Violence does, at least sometimes, “work”. In other words, it achieves its immediate purpose. For example:

- A homeowner turns his gun on an intruder who, as a result, ends up in jail.
- In 1930 the British dropped 500 tons of bombs on the Pathans in the North-Western Frontier of India, enabling the British to retain control of the area.
- The 1991 war on Iraq forced dictator Saddam Hussein to pull his troops out of Kuwait—and off the U.S. oil supply.

But, in any of these cases, did violence work in a longer-term, broader sense? The feeling that tells us that violence “works” is often not based on facts. Let’s take a look at some additional facts about the three incidents cited above.

- If you count up all the accidental deaths and other mishaps that result from keeping a gun at home, they are almost 40 times more common than the scenario where an intruder is scared off.
- The bombing raids of the British did not crush the spirits of the Pathans. Instead they caused their militant group, the Red Shirts, to grow from about 200 to 80,000.
- In the case of the war on Iraq, U.S. sanctions weakened the Iraqi people to the point where they could no longer resist their harsh leader, even if they wanted to. And it has created enormous hatred against the United States, a level of which may have resulted in the September 11 events.

Gandhi frequently said, “Violent revolution will bring violent *swaraj* (regime)”. Not maybe, not sometimes; he meant it as a law. Sometimes it may take a long time for these unhappy results to mature, and then we have to have good eyes to see the connection, but it is there.

We also have to look more deeply to understand and appreciate the workings of nonviolence. Nonviolence works on a much deeper level than violence. Every time someone uses real nonviolence things get better and the system moves forward toward stable peace, whether or not the nonviolent action achieved its immediate goals.

DOES NONVIOLENCE WORK?

Let's look at a couple of situations where nonviolence may not have "worked" in the short term, but did work when viewed in a longer-term, broader context.

- In Auschwitz during the summer of 1941 ten men were chosen to be executed as punishment for a man who had escaped. Father Kolbe of Niepokalanow offered his life in exchange for one of the condemned men. A fellow prisoner stated years later that Father Kolbe's act gave hope to thousands of prisoners because they realized that the true world continued to exist. Father Kolbe saved not one life, but thousands.

It is the degree of the sacrifice, not the number of sacrificers, that gives a nonviolent act its power.

- In 1968 the Soviet Union sent massive armies into Czechoslovakia to squelch a less extreme regime. An invasion that was predicted to take four days took eight months because the Czech people fraternized with the army as people and did not cooperate with them as invaders. The Prague Spring did not last long. But then, neither did the mighty empire that seemed to win that unequal struggle.

People who will not submit cannot be ruled. They can be killed, but they cannot be ruled.

Nonviolence works when it is not passive and when people stand up for higher ideals. An astonishing fact is that only one person has been killed and three wounded in the whole history of nonviolent interposition—a history going back to the early part of the 20th century and involving tens of thousands of volunteers who were not highly trained. This chapter can be summarized in the following statement.

Violence sometimes "works," but never works, while nonviolence sometimes "works" and always works.

Somewhere, somehow, violence will always hurt, while somewhere, somehow, nonviolence will always heal. What kind of life do you want? What kind of world are you willing to stand up for?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do we really seek to understand the nature of violence or the hidden implications of violent thought? How pervasive is violence in our society and our culture? How is it conditioning our children to think and act?
2. Is the distinction of "work" and work an accurate, valid, and meaningful way to think about violence and nonviolence? Does this paradigm provide you with a better way of putting these terms into context?
3. The book claims that "when one is passive in the face of aggression, passive out of fear, one is going along with the violence, obeying its logic". Do you believe it follows that passivity can be a form of violence?
4. Do you believe that part of the reason governments and societies often resort to violence is because we tend to be more reactive than proactive? Do you believe that violence may be an outcome of societies that desire immediate results, combined with the fact that nonviolence is a slower process?
5. Consider a specific example such as the Gulf War. When the U.S. went into Iraq, did we really understand the implications and potential outcomes? Did we foresee the events of September 11? Could we have chosen a different approach to the one we used with Iraq over the past decades that would have resulted in greater stability in the region and decreased the likelihood that violence will occur there again?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Pick either a violent or nonviolent event that intrigues you. Research the conditions leading up to that event and research the long-term outcomes of the event. Does this broader, longer-term perspective change your attitude about the outcome of the event? Can you see options that you may not have noticed previously?
2. One of the key points in this chapter is that violence can be measured by the degree of dehumanization. The chapter goes on to say that the degree of nonviolence you need to apply escalates accordingly (see pages 123-125 for more information). Can you think of historical or personal events where this rule has applied and where a serious situation could have been diverted if the dehumanizing aspects had been mitigated earlier?
3. Start practicing to view events in your life in a longer-term and broader context. Watch how this changes your perspectives, understanding, and ability to behave more nonviolently.

CHAPTER 5

A WAY OUT OF HELL

In this chapter, we broaden our focus from nonviolence as it applies to individuals, and start looking at the relevance of nonviolence at the institutional level.

By examining our criminal justice system (the system that is explicitly charged with responding to violence), we see that nonviolent principles offer us a way to address the issue of crime in our society. We look at solutions that address our short term-need for response and, more importantly, lead us to addressing the root causes of violence in the long term.

- What is the root cause of violent and self-destructive behavior?
- Why is our current criminal justice system flawed? What “wrong” ideas is this system based on?
- What is the solution to our criminal justice system and what are the underlying principles that guide this solution?
- What changes do we need to make in order to move from our current criminal justice system to a system that prevents crime, violence, and alienation from happening in the first place?

WHAT IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF VIOLENT AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Research and experience have shown that people engage in violence and self-destructive behavior (such as drug abuse) when they are missing meaning and purpose in life. One striking example of this connection is the unexpected by-product of the largely nonviolent first Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 1987-1992. The drug abuse problem among youth virtually disappeared as more and more young people were pulled into the uprising. They had found purposeful work to engage in, and they stopped taking drugs. They discovered the inner peace that can lift us out of potent addictions—the peace that comes when we’ve found a convincing purpose in life.

WHY IS OUR CURRENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM FLAWED? WHAT “WRONG” IDEAS IS THIS SYSTEM BASED ON?

At this time, more than half the incarceration and juvenile detention in America is for drug-related crimes. Americans pay a staggering amount for illegal drugs and the money we pay to “fight” the drug war is equally staggering. We are on the path of incarcerating an increasing number of people and we lead the world in our increased use of the death penalty. The United States—the world’s oldest democracy—is leading the world backwards into punitive violence. While this is happening, we are not seeing any decrease in the level of crime and violence.

This double failure—the rise in crime and violence and the nation’s inability to do more than contain them, at best—has brought our civilization to a defining moment. If we are to understand why, we must look at the flawed beliefs that our current system is built on.

- That violence and self-destructive behavior are crimes that need to be punished; that the perpetrators are unsalvageable and need to be locked away.
- That there are people who are inherently “evil” and need to be expelled from society.
- That criminals are not people and there is no moral obligation to find ways to rehumanize and reintegrate them back into society.

Our current system violates a fundamental spiritual principle—that of “Hate the sin, love the sinner”.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THIS SOLUTION?

Amidst this crisis, we see many positive examples that point us to the solution: the transformation of poachers into animal guardians in Argentina, the transformation of young offenders into caretakers of the disabled in Los Angeles, the work within prisons (initiated by prisoners) to unlearn aggressive behaviors and learn healing behaviors. These examples all point to a new way of thinking that focuses on changing the criminal justice system from being a network of correctional centers to a network of healing centers. Instead of seeing prisons as facilities for warehousing and punishment, we can see prisons as facilities for restoration and social healing. This is what is meant as “restorative justice” as opposed to “punitive justice”, which is what we have today. Restorative justice is based on a different set of principles.

- That it is more important to seek understanding than to seek blame.
- That the way to address social disorder is not to label people as victims and victimizers (thus creating combatants), but to “weave combatants, weakest victims first, back into a social fabric of mutual trust, mutual safety, mutual security”.
- That “criminals” are human beings, with full human potential, who have become alienated. If crime is alienation (a kind of violence), it cannot be healed by vindictive punishment (another kind of violence).
- That the purpose of a criminal justice system is to rehumanize those who have become alienated in society, not to punish.
- That violence is not a “given” in people, but rather a learned behavior. As such, it is possible to unlearn violent behavior.

In the world of criminal justice, rehumanization is being able to look at people realistically and understanding how they became lawbreakers. Then we will know what to do with them and—much more importantly—what to do so that others do not go through the same process.

WHAT CHANGES DO WE NEED TO MAKE IN ORDER TO MOVE FROM OUR CURRENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM TO A SYSTEM THAT PREVENTS CRIME, VIOLENCE, AND ALIENATION FROM HAPPENING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

True security comes from living in a loving community—one where we can be certain of love and support no matter what happens. We need to develop this kind of security, rather than rely on the “pseudo-security” that comes from a system that locks “criminals” out of sight.

Three steps will get us there:

1. We need restorative justice for arrestees, particularly if they are young. Research has documented the inherent inability of a revenge system to accomplish any positive social purpose.
2. Strong family systems are key to crime prevention. To augment family support, we need more support for programs that can head off criminal behavior, especially strong youth programs. Schooling is the second most potent way, after the family itself, of keeping people from committing crime; education is rehumanizing.
3. We must patiently, resolutely take apart the culture of violence our material civilization has created and replace it part after part, institution by institution, with a culture of peace. That new culture is based on the long-overdue “revolution of values” called for by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Part of this “cultural re-engineering” requires an overhaul of our education system from one that only prepares people for jobs to one that also prepares them to find a higher purpose in life and work that reflects that purpose. Another part requires an overhaul of the “values messaging” that is perpetrated in our mass media. So the full, deep solution to the crime epidemic—the solution that works before people do damage to themselves and others—is restorative not only for those who may have fallen through the cracks, but for the culture itself.

The task before us is to create loving community and the way to understand and address that task is through nonviolence, which is rooted fundamentally in elevating rather than depressing the human image.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where and how could I have some influence in facilitating the shift from retributive to restorative justice?
2. What would it take for *me* to change *my* attitude about “criminals”?
3. Where can I go to learn more about restorative justice?
4. What can we learn from the successes of restorative justice that might apply to other areas, from child rearing to international conflicts?

PRACTICE EXERCISE

1. Find out about an alternative, restorative-based group in your community, whether it be a citizens’ group or part of the traditional system. Is this something to which you’d like to contribute? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 6

THE SWEET SOUND OF ORDER

Nonviolence has two faces: that of non-cooperating with evil (civil disobedience, boycotts, protests) and that of cooperating with good.

In this chapter, we examine what it means to cooperate with good and how this application of nonviolent principles is brought to bear in the important work of proactively constructing a loving community. Using Gandhi's "Constructive Programme" as a model, we examine how we might creatively engage the power of nonviolence to "re-engineer" our own culture so that it supports the development of a peace-based society.

- What was Gandhi's Constructive Programme and what were its underlying principles?
- What can we learn from Gandhi's great experiment in Constructive Programme, and what would Constructive Programme look like today, in the West?
- How do we continue the path that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. started in our own country—the path to a loving community?

WHAT WAS GANDHI'S CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND WHAT WERE ITS UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES?

Constructive Programme was a roster of 18 projects, designed to rebuild India from the ground up. Constructive Programme integrated a set of activities that were focused on restoring village-based economic self-sufficiency while also restoring human dignity and equality for all.

Constructive Programme was organized like a solar system, and central to this system of rebuilding was the spinning of homespun cotton. The charkha (spinning wheel) served as a symbol of the "sun" in this solar system. Not only did it represent, quite tangibly, the restoration of village economies and self sufficiency, but it also had symbolic significance for Indians (an ancient symbol of the wheel of existence, of life and death).

The Charkha was ideal as the central focal point of this solar system of projects. Spinning gave control back to India over the necessities of life (clothing being a basic need), and there were other practical aspects—it was a concrete symbol, constructive, and non-confrontational. Everyone could participate, everyone could do it every day, it was proactive, and (being an act of truth) it directly addressed the lie of colonialism, the lie of India's dependency on Britain.

A variety of projects were situated around this central idea of spinning. Some focused on the uplift and reintegration of marginalized groups (such as untouchables and women) and some addressed specific problems (such as substance abuse, poverty, and cultural deterioration).

Underlying Constructive Programme were some key principles:

- Recognition of the efficacy of the power that is released when anger is transformed, and how the resulting power (nonviolence) could be used to create and reconstruct, as opposed to confront and destroy.
- The understanding that the true meaning of nonviolence was not in grand dramatic confrontations, but rather in the steady day to day "hum" of peaceful daily life.
- The idea of "heart unity" (desiring the happiness of others, despite differences). This principle lay behind every project, as Constructive Programme sought to heal every aspect of the injured country's condition.
- The idea of swadeshi (self-reliance and local action), of operating within your sphere of direct influence. Constructive Programme shifts the focus from "them" to "us".

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM GANDHI'S GREAT EXPERIMENT IN CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME, AND WHAT WOULD CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME LOOK LIKE TODAY, IN THE WEST?

Clearly, we cannot import Gandhi's Constructive Programme wholesale into our culture and time. The impressive thing about Constructive Programme, the thing we can still use, is its vision—the way it addressed every hurting problem with one inspired energy. Today in the West we can use that energy, as well as the organizational model. The energy is nonviolence; the model is a broad range of projects with a “solar” project holding them together and bringing them into range of a single vision, a project that everyone can take part in.

For our Constructive Programme, we must put a key project at the very center of this “Solar System”, a project that begins in personal choice—to break the hold of the mass media over our values and culture.

The creative use of nonviolence energy by individuals has often proven effective and transformative (for example, the Weisseurs' response to extreme racism, Rosa Parks' courageous refusal to change seats on the bus, successful reconciliation projects). Constructive Programme is an attempt to introduce this nonviolence energy into the social structure on a grand scale. In order for successful “nonviolence-fueled” projects to thrive, multiply, and ultimately be institutionalized, we need cultural support, which is why better media and programming takes center stage as the sun around which other healing projects of our Constructive Programme should revolve.

HOW DO WE CONTINUE THE PATH THAT DR. KING STARTED IN OUR OWN COUNTRY—THE PATH TO A LOVING COMMUNITY?

We can continue this path in two important ways:

- Through personal engagement. Dr. King said, “Nonviolence in the truest sense is not a strategy that one uses simply because it is expedient at the moment; nonviolence is ultimately a way of life that men [and women] live by because of the sheer morality of its claim.”
- Through facilitating institutional change, starting with the “institution” of our basic values and how we shape and communicate them. We can re-engineer the culture by re-engineering our media messages and changing the way we act with one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Name five or six areas of our society that need major revision in the light of nonviolence. What would they look like if they were fueled by nonviolence, instead of violent (that is, competitive) energy?
2. In addition to boycotting violent mass media, how else could we, as individuals, create a healthier culture in the U.S.?
3. How could we expand our individual influence as social activists?

PRACTICE EXERCISE

1. Draw a picture of what you think is needed for a Constructive Programme in the U.S. What would be the center project that pulls everything together and what would be the other projects in the “Solar System”?

CHAPTER 7

A CLEAR PICTURE OF PEACE

How can nonviolent energy be applied to the largest-scale violence—war?

This chapter conveys that, although all our attempts at creating peace have failed, our leaders need not give up yet on peace. All previous attempts to bring about peace were grounded in the wrong kind of energy—violence. It is proposed that there is a way to peace that is grounded in the energy (soul-force) of nonviolence.

How, then, should this nonviolent peacemaking start? “Peacemaking is nothing more than the application of soul-force to human violence at its greatest scale. Therefore it must begin, somehow, with deep changes that take place within the person.” Professor Nagler proposes three stages, or projects, that must take place for soul-force to become a peace system in the world: thought, word, and deed.

In this chapter, we lay the groundwork for tackling war by examining questions of “thought” and “word”.

- How do we implement peace in our thinking?
- How do we examine and change our language in order to develop a culture of peace?

With this foundation, we are then prepared to start looking at examples of nonviolent action (“deed”) that provide alternatives to war. These examples are examined in Chapter 8.

THINKING PEACE—HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT PEACE IN OUR THINKING?

“All wars begin in the minds of men.” In agreement with this truism from the UNESCO Charter, we trace war to its root: the undisciplined mind. “Whoever owns such a mind will feel insecure no matter what situation you put him or her in, which will spread insecurity to all those around, which in course of time can become the mass insecurity known as war.” Our fixation on nuclear weapons, for example, constrains our vision and prepares the way for violence such as we’ve seen in the Persian Gulf.

A sped-up, fragmented, or compulsive mind is prone to violent thoughts. A trained, responsive mind tends toward positive ones. Professor Nagler recommends and explains the systematic practice of meditation as “the most powerful, direct and meaningful way to discipline the mind”. This practice allows us not only to replace some of the negative content of our mind, but also to slow down and recollect it, thereby redirecting it.

TALKING OUR WALK—HOW DO WE EXAMINE AND CHANGE OUR LANGUAGE IN ORDER TO DEVELOP A CULTURE OF PEACE?

We then address the question: “What causes or allows a human being to do inhuman actions?” Language (that is, the content, images, and metaphors of the mind) is the bridge between thought and action. Although humans have an innate respect for each other, dehumanizing language can obscure this intuition. For example, in the 1980s the Guatemalan military dictator, General Mejia, depicted the nation’s guerillas as “fish” that could be killed by draining out the “water”, the indigenous population. Similarly, the community of defense experts often dehumanizes people (cities are called “targets”), while also humanizing things (for example, “smart bombs”).

Competitiveness and violence have also become normalized in education and everyday language. Colleges teach students how to compete for money. Educational institutions compete against each other. In everyday language we may say “competitive” when we mean “good”. We may casually say, “I hate you”, or that something we like is “to die for”.

Nevertheless, language—“the key to thoughts”—can be worked on independently of the thinking process. And everyone can begin this work today. Paying closer attention to the violence in our speech allows us to be more careful about what we say and to “scrupulously call things what they are”. Beginning at the simplest level—our own speech—we begin laying a more secure foundation that can “help to roll back the monstrous momentum of the war system”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When do you find your mind racing or agitated? How does this influence your behavior and relationships with those around you?
2. From your own experience, what happens when punishment is used to stop someone from causing harm to others? What happens when kindness is used instead?
3. What are some ways we can slow the pace of our thoughts?
4. What are some examples of violence or competitiveness in language? Is there a more truthful, loving, humane way to phrase it?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Spend a day checking in on the pace of your thinking. If it is fast and agitated, try slowing it down a little. For instance, turn off the T.V., listen to some soothing music, go for a fast walk.
2. Keep a notepad with you and make a list of negative expressions that we’d normally take for granted. Make a list of positive ones too. For each negative expression, compose an positive alternative. Put this positive list in a place you frequent often (for example, on the refrigerator, by the computer).

CHAPTER 8

FIGHTING FIRE WITH WATER

In Chapter 7, we examined the role that thought and speech play in a violence-based society and explored ways in which new approaches to thought and speech could lay the foundation for a culture of peace.

In this chapter, we look at peace in action (deed) and examine what kinds of actions take place when the power of nonviolence is employed. We specifically look at examples of nonviolence as it has been put into action in the past 100+ years in connection with large-scale armed conflict.

By looking at these actions in the context of a vision which Gandhi helped to articulate and develop—as part of the “grand experiment” to advance the application of nonviolence, and with the understanding of the underlying principles behind all successful nonviolent action—we lay the groundwork for tackling the hardest question we face today:

How could nonviolence put an end to war?

Key questions addressed in this chapter are:

- What was Gandhi’s vision for how nonviolence could be employed to tackle the problem of large-scale conflict?
- What actions have been taken so far to advance this “grand experiment”?
- What might the next stage of experimentation be?

- What changes must we consciously pursue in order to facilitate the paradigm shift that is necessary if we are to render war obsolete and institutionalize peace?
- What would it take to make love replace war?

WHAT WAS GANDHI'S VISION FOR HOW NONVIOLENCE COULD BE EMPLOYED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF LARGE-SCALE CONFLICT?

Nonviolence has always been present in the course of human history. What Gandhi did was to develop a systematic approach for the application (the “science”) of nonviolence. After years of experimentation and success in using the power of nonviolence to liberate a disenfranchised population (the Indian community of South Africa), he decided that this power could also be employed to challenge the “principalities and powers” that had led mankind into endless wars since the dawn of recorded history. Satyagraha was the opposite of war; it could be the cure for war.

But how could a method, albeit a highly successful one, that was developed to resist injustice *within* a country be applied *between* countries?

In 1913, when Gandhi returned to India to confront the British Raj, he openly talked about the Shanti Sena (“armies of peace”), bands of trained volunteers whose nonviolent presence and nonviolent skills would make the police and national guard unnecessary. Locally-based, “they would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible”. Most importantly, this kind of army would end the age-old reliance on threat power. Gandhi is talking about a nonviolent equivalent of the police and the military used as police. And it’s only a short step to replacing the military where they are normally used—in war.

The most dramatic example of where this vision took hold is in the Northwest Territories, where a close Muslim disciple of Gandhi’s, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, raised a nonviolent army to resist the British for over a decade. These Pathan fighters, nearly 100,000 strong, came from a tradition of revenge and nonviolence. This example is particularly important in that it explodes four serious myths about nonviolence: (1) Nonviolence is for gentlefolk, (2) Since nonviolence is weak, it can only work against weak opponents, (3) Nonviolence is OK for Hindus and Buddhists; it is not for Muslims, and (4) Nonviolence can’t be used in, or instead of, war.

Gandhi’s way was to extrapolate from the known successes of nonviolence to the biggest cases where it had not yet been tried. When India faced an impending Japanese invasion in the 1940’s, he proposed a bold vision of how nonviolent armies could be applied in the case of national defense. Unfortunately, he was jailed and was not given the opportunity to demonstrate this idea. However, he did lay the groundwork for the actions we now called Civilian-Based Defense (CBD).

WHAT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN SO FAR TO ADVANCE THIS “GRAND EXPERIMENT”?

Nonviolent actions so far fall into two categories:

- Defensive nonviolence, in which citizens defend their society against invasion or Takeovers
- Interventionary nonviolence, in which third-party interveners carry out actions that can take many forms

In the area of defensive nonviolence, there are numerous examples where nonviolence has been successfully applied in the arena of Civilian-Based Defense, or Nonviolent Civil Defense (for example, Algeria, Philippines, China, Moscow, and others). In these cases, rival factions within a country are fighting and the third parties are the citizenry of that country. There are also examples where CBD was used to resist the invasion of another country (for example, Prague Spring).

In cases where the internal situation in a country has become so out of hand that it cannot be handled by the citizens of that country, there are numerous examples of how nonviolent third-party intervention (interventionary nonviolence) can work. Thirdparty interveners carry out actions that can take many forms—such as humanitarian aid, moral support, human rights protection and monitoring,

and, finally, interposition—to break up advanced conflict. Since the 1980’s, there have been at least 20 peace team organizations carrying out third-party intervention with good success. The most successful of these interventions is in the area of protective accompaniment, where trained nonviolent international volunteers provide 24-hour accompaniment (“unarmed bodyguards”) to key human rights leaders, providing the safe space for local organizations to carry out their work.

One key example of this work is the 24-hour accompaniment provided by Peace Brigades International (PBI) to the leaders of Guatemalan civil society. It is believed that PBI played an important supporting role to those who eventually were able to continue the work of building democracy and peace in that country.

WHAT MIGHT THE NEXT STAGE OF EXPERIMENTATION BE?

So far, many of the organizations that carry out this important work are small, underfunded, and under-supported. What could happen if they were better trained, better funded, supported, and the work was recognized? What could happen if there was a well-developed, well-trained, highly supported network of international nonviolent volunteers, ready to be deployed as rapid response teams to areas of conflict, as an alternative to military action? And what if these teams were equipped to carry out any combination of nonviolent intervention techniques, as the situation required? The dream continues and there is a movement underway to establish such a force. This effort, the Nonviolent Peaceforce, seeks to build upon the successes and lessons learned from the numerous peace team organizations that have been doing this work for the past 25 years. It also seeks to see what can be done on a larger scale—hundreds of volunteers, as opposed to tens of volunteers.

What is new today is the conscious attempt to do this systematically, on a global scale. The goal here is not to stop this war or that war, but eventually to stop war itself—by providing a nonviolent alternative to the whole system.

WHAT CHANGES MUST WE CONSCIOUSLY PURSUE IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE PARADIGM SHIFT THAT IS NECESSARY IF WE ARE TO RENDER WAR OBSOLETE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE PEACE?

In order to craft the answer to this question, we must first examine the fundamental flaws underlying our current war system, and dismantle the “logic of war”:

- Conventional methods today are: (1) fight or flee, (2) threaten or ignore. All alternatives are based on threat power, which does not lay a foundation for peace in the long run. To be torn between doing nothing and dropping bombs is to face a “choice” between violence and violence; that is, no choice at all.
- Armed peacekeeping has proven to be a marginal solution, at best. It may provide a stop-gap solution, but it does not move us towards any real peace. This is because it tries to reach positive ends through hurtful means. Peacekeeping with weapons is doomed to fail in the long run. It lacks the power that comes from matching right means with consistent ends.
- The prison system, the imperial system, and the war system are all based on threat power. The answer is to reorganize these systems and let them act as a channel for another kind of power; nonviolent intervention in severe conflicts is a perfect example.
- Our current system causes us to become spiritually bankrupt. When we are faced with the “choice” to threaten or ignore, we are living a lie. If we ignore the suffering of others, we are essentially saying, “tough, but we’re not you”. This attitude diminishes our own humanity.
- War engages the wrong energies and cannot but lead to the wrong results. Nonviolent peacemaking, on the other hand, seeks to institutionalize another kind of power—integrative power. It challenges old thinking and seeks another way. For example, quoting a Shanti Sainik (a peace army volunteer in India), “Whereas intimacy is a hindrance for a violent army, it was an essential for an effective nonviolent army”.

Because it treats people with concern and respect, never dehumanizing them, nonviolent peacemaking succeeds even when it “fails”, while peacemaking-as-usual fails to bring us closer to a more peaceful world even when it “succeeds”. People are people; the kind of action you put them into very largely determines how they will develop.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO MAKE LOVE REPLACE WAR?

The point of our discussion so far has not been that peace teams can end war. It is that nonviolence can end war. We have now thought about the three levels of change— thought, speech, and action—that have to happen for the creative influence of soul-force to be applied by ordinary people toward the creation of a peace regime. For this is what we want—a robust system of conflict-absorption able to deal with war in such a creative way that it results in meaningful and lasting peace.

Peace teams, for many reasons, give us a good start towards developing this system. They are implementing nonviolent alternatives to war in the toughest of conflict situations. In this movement and in the world, it is clear that there are two changes we must make to get peace teams off the drawing board and into the historic drama of leading us down the path of stable peace: (1) we must stage a success, and (2) we must prepare people’s minds to grasp that success. Specifically, this means we must dramatically bolster the peace team movement with adequate resources, strong infrastructure and communications, public support, sophisticated training, public education in nonviolence, and active media.

By giving massive support to these important activities, the institutionalization of peace will open up a need for supporters with many different talents. That support will be more moral and far less financial, and it will also need something that a conventional war does not; it will need what’s called “interpretation”. The world at large does not understand how nonviolence works. Even a dramatic “win” by a nonviolent peace team would likely be ignored or so mishandled by the press that it would not have an educational effect.

So we need to train the media in how to cover these events and how to provide this important interpretation service. The logic of war may be deeply flawed, but it’s dreadfully familiar, and paralyzingly simple. It follows directly from what we think we know about human nature—that people respond only to force. This is not the case with the logic of peace.

With our current situation, this shift will require a conscious effort on our part. There isn’t a lot of time. But there is reason for hope, for belief that it can be done. We must remember two important points that make this enormous change possible:

- Peace is the deepest drive of our being.
- Soul-force has never been systematically put to work to create the conditions and institutions of sustained peace. As Norman Cousins used to say, “no one knows enough to be a pessimist”.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How could Rapid Response Teams be instituted for nonviolent, instead of military, intervention?
2. Identify some conflicts from the present in which interventionary or defensive nonviolence might be used. What would that nonviolence look like?
3. Humanitarian aid, moral support, human rights protection, and interposition are specific forms of interventionary nonviolence. How can these techniques be applied today? Are you aware of any present-day examples where nonviolence has been applied to resolving war or other conflict situations?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

1. Outline how you would convince an individual, a community, a state, a region, a nation, or some other constellation of individuals that nonviolence is a viable, and preferable, alternative to war? What would it take to change people's minds and hearts?
2. Outline how you would go about institutionalizing interventionary nonviolence or defensive nonviolence. What would be your process?

CHAPTER 9 TOWARD A METAPHYSICS OF COMPASSION

This final chapter is rich in metaphor and example as it examines feelings and presents ideas that help us to understand why it is important for human beings to be compassionate. Professor Nagler connects an ancient myth, seen in part of Homer's *Iliad*, with the beginnings of modern science. In the first case we see an unexpected evocation of compassion; in the latter, its compromise.

Newton's science showed us a universe that is based on matter (separate, solid, finite particles), in which there is bound to be a scarcity of things needed by living organisms. From that follows the normalization of competition and the sense that "I can hurt you without hurting me"—that is, a world view of violence. After the discovery of quantum theory a hundred years ago, we see a universe that is based on energy (with its strange connections to ancient mythology and timeless mysticism). In this view, the logical infrastructure of violence is removed and we see an organic human relationship with the living earth where no events are random or isolated, but are all part of a mysteriously connected whole. Professor Nagler suggests that, if we could face the consequences of that change on the scientific and other levels, we could move toward a world based not on matter, but on spirit, in which scarcity and competition become unnecessary—that is, a nonviolent future.

Two key concepts form the basis of the new nonviolent infrastructure: unity-indiversity, and Gandhi's "heart unity". The sanctity of individual life is not only a moral norm, but a tremendous undeveloped resource for peace.

We are asked to open our hearts to our fellow human beings, to be willing to be hurt, and to suffer with them in compassion and grow rather than close our hearts and inwardly die. Professor Nagler suggests that our willingness to do this is predicated on a view of humanity as an interconnected whole, as well as an acceptance that we all have in common basic needs and aspirations that create a foundation of "heart unity", a unity *beneath* the surface. By contrast, our diversity is *on* the surface—a diversity of outward characteristics.

Our unity comes from our underlying consciousness which has no divisions and which believes that "I am in touch with that unity when I want you to be fulfilled in the way you can be fulfilled, not necessarily the way I'd be fulfilled". That we can and should both be fulfilled is a cardinal principle of faith in the world of Satyagraha; that we have different ways of getting there is equally cardinal.

We learn that the problems of violence arise when we focus on our surface differences and try to eliminate them in an attempt to create more surface unity or uniformity. This approach inevitably involves some kind of domination and/or dependency—some kind of dehumanization of the uniqueness, and denial of the common needs and aspirations, of other human beings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of examples where you, or others close to you, act or speak as if we are separate (“I can hurt you without hurting me”). What in our culture and belief systems reinforces this view of the world?
2. What experiences have you had that reinforce a world view of interconnectedness— a sense of the “unity of heart” *beneath* the surface of humanity? What in our culture and belief systems reinforces this view of the world? What effects have you noticed when this interconnectedness is recognized?
3. How could science lead to a nonviolent future, and yet still be a rigorous form of knowledge-acquisition (in fact, more so)?
4. How could our much more rigorous observation of the norm of the sanctity of individual life become a source for change?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Every day for a week, ask yourself the following questions at the end of the day:

1. What person or conversation annoyed or angered me today?
 - Was I able to see underneath surface differences, even disagreements, to some aspect of common unity? If not, how might I have been able to do so? How did, or how would, that insight affect the situation?
 - What was my response in the moment and how does my present understanding of interconnectedness, or unity in diversity, help to explain that effect?
2. In what person or conversation did I unexpectedly glimpse the unity of life?
 - How did that feel? Was I surprised and, if so, why?
 - What was my response in the moment and what does this tell me about my present understanding of unity in diversity?
3. What am I learning about my compassion and empathy? What action will I take based on what I’ve learned?