



Love Your Enemy: a Campaign to Reclaim Human Dignity Through Nonviolence –Talking Points

1. What's going wrong:

- “We’re making terrorists faster than we can kill them.” This telling comment was made by a military commander in Iraq. Rousing hatred and loathing — hardly a way to get secure — comes with the inevitable humiliation that accompanies acts of violence (think Abu Ghraib). Scientists have shown that disrespect is the number one predictor of violence; and peace researcher Johan Galtung found that the stubborn conflict underlying the industrialized West and the Islamic world is based on the fact that, while we want access to their oil reserves, they ultimately want respect for their religion. Nothing prevents us from resolving the conflict if we could keep our focus on our real needs. Unfortunately we are locked into a response that generates insults, so that both sides lose sight of their needs in the fight over competing wants.
- The wars have involved a horrific cost not only in life and treasure, but in a marked ‘expense of spirit’: not only PTSD but what one scientist, Rachel MacNair, has called Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS) — the damage we do to *ourselves* when we inflict harm on others. As one veteran recently put it, “I am no longer the person I want to be. I lost my soul in Iraq.” We must realize that this damage is not limited to combat veterans; we have all been damaged in our souls by the return to torture and brutalities of these mechanized wars. As Martin Luther King said, “an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Likewise, insults anywhere are a threat to the human image everywhere.

2. *Why* it’s going so wrong:

- Societies under stress sometimes erupt in what René Girard calls “unanimous violence” and irrational scapegoating, which is never a real solution.
- Violence may sometimes “work” but it never works: it may force some local change but never improves the underlying relationships. The state of Israel has the most effective, and ruthless anti-terrorist system in the world, and has never known a day’s peace in over 60 years.
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3. There *are* alternatives:

- “terrorism cannot be condoned, but it can be *understood*. **No one** is beyond change. The most cruelly conditioned people have been won over (see *The Search for a Nonviolent Future* for examples.) As MLK said in his speech, “Love Your Enemy:” “sometimes

people hate you because they are jealous, because you're better at something than they are ... and sometimes they hate you because you've done something wrong to them.”

We must understand that our country has wronged many in the Islamic world. For one example: the CIA (and other agencies) were involved in the overthrow of a popular, democratically elected President in Iran (1953), producing the regime we now fear. Not that these mistakes of our mean that we *deserved* to suffer the attacks of 9/11, but they do mean that those who committed terrorism against us were not beyond the pale of reason.

- Justice is not a ‘blood sport’: it is not too late to change our thinking about 9/11 and treat it not as an act of war but a heinous crime. The International Criminal Court is one institution created by the international community to deal with such cases.
- The U.S. has as a matter of policy supported authoritarian regimes all through the Islamic world, and other regions; yet democratization, à la Egypt, etc. is the most effective way to security for them and ourselves. This brings us to:
- Other gifts of the nonviolent spirit: the search for peace by nonviolent means (the only means that really work, we believe) has produced highly innovative, and effective institutions like Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping, carried out by groups like Nonviolent Peaceforce. As one Kurdish man recently said, nonviolence may be slower but “you don’t lose your soul.” When Philippine resistors took to nonviolence to overthrow dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the (1986) they called the method *alay dangal*, to ‘offer dignity.’ With nonviolence you do not humiliate your opponent, which would lead to further violence; you break the cycle.
- And finally, security researchers have now developed concepts of “Human Security” (embracing much more than just the absence of military threat: the right to food, healthcare, etc.) and most importantly “Common Security”: the real road to security is not through deterring enemies but turning them into friends; or at least not threatening them.

We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamed-of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.”

M.K. Gandhi