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PACS 164B Spring 2006

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What's Buddhist About Buddhist Social Activism? , S. Segall
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Preface Materials

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PACS 164B: NONVIOLENCE TODAY

M.N. Nagler

Spring, 2006
120-D Stephens
Off. Hours: TTh 2-3

Course Syllabus

In this course we explore the potential of nonviolence in our increasingly violent world. What has been done, what has been learned since the great movements of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King? What might nonviolent people and movements need to learn today to go forward more effectively?

PACS 164A is not technically prerequisite to this course, if one has some prior exposure to nonviolence theory. Building on our explorations of principled nonviolence in 164A, we will be looking at insurrectionary struggles, reform movements, human rights efforts and anti-militarism, among areas in which non(-)violence has been or is being used. We will attempt to trace some of the historical background for most of these struggles. Of necessity, the era of visionary leaders being over (at least for now!), we will deal more with strategic non-violence than we do in the introductory course. In part Four we will look at the diverse current struggles against corporate globalization and in Part Five the 'state of the art' of nonviolent theory and other aspects of a "cultural creative" paradigm shift, i.e., the growth of nonviolent consciousness both in the formal peace movement and what Boulding called the "movement toward peace." Where are we now and where do we go from here?

As in the introductory course, there will be a midterm, a final, and a term paper, the latter based on any aspect of contemporary nonviolence. I would like to help you get an earlier start on that paper, and will be discussing that shortly. Since this course deals with contemporary developments, we will be able to draw much more frequently on recent films and especially on guest speakers, many of whom are 'in the field' carrying out these struggles as we speak. For this reason we will have to adjust our schedule to make use of opportunities as they arise. You should keep pace with the scheduled readings, as that will allow us to be flexible with guests and other resources as they come up. A xerox **reader** is available at Copy Central on Bancroft, divided into sections that follow the schedule, and it lists supplementary resources in Moffitt and elsewhere. Check **Courseweb** regularly for periodic announcements and resource material. Finally,

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings</u> (abbreviations below)
Part One: Introduction		
1. 1/17-19	Basic terms and major trends. Some historical bkgd.: nv insurrection in El Salvador, 1944 and its sequellae.	Deats in Wink, "Global Spread of Active NV (and page 1); ZKA Intro, Part I. <i>Reader</i> : Section One; Nagler (as needed)

2. 1/24-26 Historical background (contd.): U.S. antiwar Wink (to be announced)
movements from radical pacifism to Vietnam. L&L: Documents 4, 12, 15A, 26A, 35B,
Films: "The Good War," (If time allows: 42B
Peace Pilgrim)

Part Two: Insurrectionary and Freedom Struggles

3. 1/31-2/2 Standing up to Hitler: The White Rose & other ZKA II;
'Conspiracies.' Film: *A Force More Powerful Reader*: Section Two
(sel'ns.);
4. 2/7-9 Films, *Where There is Hatred; Beyond* ZKA III
Rangoon (seln's.) Schock (sel'ns. to be announced)
The collapse of communism: From Prague
Spring to the 'colorful' revolutions
5. 2/14-16 The rise of "People Power:" disaster in ZKA IV.7&9, V.11, VI. 13, VII.14
Beijing; stalemate in Burma; victory in the
Philippines

Part Three: Anti-Militarism and Related Struggles

6. 2/21-23 1. The Larzac Satyagraha; *Reader*: Section Three
Guest speaker: Sr. Helen Prejean! (probably)
7. 2/28-3/2 2. Shanti Sena and its offspring (TPNI); MW: Fwd., Chaps. 1-3, 7, 9, 11, 14,
Guest speaker(s) from NP, PBI; Criminal App. A; Gish, Fwd., Intro., pp. 15-70, 281-
Justice and Human Rights 5; Boardman, (seln's.);
www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org
8. 3/7-9 3. Animal rights & early environmentalism:
Chipko (and her offspring); Tabasco
9. 3/14-16 **General Review**
► MIDTERM: Thursday, March 16
10. 3/21-23 **Midterm diagnostic** Wink Chaps. 1,2,5,7,8; 14,17,18,20;
NV thinkers and actors 24,26,28; 31, 39-46
11. 3/28-30 **SPRING BREAK !** Catch up (and chill out)

Part Four: "Globalization from Below"

12. 4/4-6 The "Seed Satyagraha," river protection, and *Reader*: Section Four
other anti-corporate struggles in India
13. 4/11-13 The MST and other alternative (CP) mvts.
Direct action ag. globalization institutions:
What Democracy Looks Like

Part Five: Toward a Nonviolent Culture

14. 4/18-20 NV theory, training and organizing *Reader: Section Five*
15. 4/25-27 “Compassionate Listening” and forgiveness; *Reader: “From Violence to Wholeness”*
Post-conflict reconciliation *section*
Film: *Long Night’s Journey Into Day*
16. 5/2-4 4. Toward a culture of peace; the “new”
spirituality
Guest speaker: Rabbi Michael Lerner
17. Tu., May 9 **Review.**
► **TERM PAPERS DUE: Tuesday, May 9**

Abbreviations:

Gish = Arthur Gish, *Hebron Journal: Stories of Nonviolent Peacemaking*
L&L = Lynd and Lynd, *Nonviolence in America: a Documentary History*
MW = Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber, *Nonviolent Intervention Across Borders: a Recurrent Vision*
Wink = Walter Wink, Ed. *Peace is the Way*
ZKA = Zunes, Kurtz and Asher, *Nonviolent Social Movements: a Geographical Perspective*

Recommended:

MvG = McConnell and van Gelder, Editors, *Making Peace: Healing a Violent World*
Nagler = Michael Nagler (who?), *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*
Schock = Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*

Related classes:

PACS 90: Theory and Practice of Meditation – TuWTh, 8-9am (210 Wheeler, ccn 66702, 1 unit)

A practicum using a modern method for systematically reducing random activity in the mind, with comparative studies of relevant texts from monastic and householder traditions, East and West. Many students of nonviolence have found this to be a natural “laboratory” compliment to 164.

PeacePower Decal – Tuesdays, 5-7pm, starting Jan 24 (classroom location TBA – email editor@calpeacepower.org, 2 units)

Former PACS 164A/B students recently started a publication, *PeacePower: Berkeley’s Journal of Principled Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation* (back issues at www.calpeacepower.org). Send an email to find out how to join the team, or just show up at one of their first decal meetings. You can also submit your paper to the editors for possible publication in an upcoming issue, and request guidance/feedback during your paper-writing process.

How to Write a Paper for PACS 164

Start with something that has captured your imagination - something appealing or puzzling about nonviolence that you want to think through. This paper is above all a learning experience for you (that's what will make it a learning experience for us). Not all papers need to be research papers (see below).

Formulate a thesis statement that sums up your idea by the time you are handing in your description: examples might be, "I want to investigate why the career of Martin Luther King took a downturn: did he make a strategic mistake, or was he just too far ahead of his time?" or "I want to illustrate and explain why symbolic action is a weak form of nonviolence that is relied on far too heavily in contemporary movements." *The lack of a succinctly expressible thesis or question is the most frequent cause of non-success in papers.*

Although nonviolence can be seen in almost every compartment of life, for purposes of a term paper the 'obstructive' side, where it comes into open conflict with opponents, is much safer. If you do write about something 'constructive' like reforming education or the media, be sure to discuss how you would get your ideas implemented in the face of opposition. Unlikely topics like water polo or karate have rarely worked.

There have been successful papers of at least two types: (1) those that investigate a single movement, or even a significant moment within a movement, to disengage from it the general principles of nonviolence it illustrates, or, conversely (2) a general principle illustrated from a variety of movements. In either case, **be specific**. "Pacifism and Early Christianity" was a very successful paper, while "Nonviolence and Religion" was not. More than this, be specific at each point of your argument, drawing on concrete examples from real history wherever possible. It's also possible, of course, to focus on a significant (not necessarily famous) nonviolent actor; not only Gandhi, King or Chavez but William Penn, André Trocmé, or (for 164B) Aung San Suu Kyi, etc. For 164A, be sure to ground your arguments in Gandhian principles if your topic is a movement that occurred after the Civil Rights movement.

Whichever route you follow, **be analytical**. Don't gush or exhort (we know Gandhi was the greatest, we know how bad the actions of the bad guys are). If you can clarify any aspect of nonviolence, it will sell itself.

Good writing is important. If you are concerned about the clarity and precision of your writing (or we suggest you should be), please get practice. Hand in an early draft, or more than one: work with us. The final product has to be well written, and we want you to be an effective writer for the benefit of the planet. A precaution in this regard: think twice about writing on topics or issues or movements with which you have been emotionally involved. You may still be, and it may upset your objectivity. We want passion, but also some detachment. You may find it helpful to read standbys like *On Writing Well* by Wm. Zinser or Strunk and White, *Manual of Style*. Here there are several things to watch out for when you're editing your work:

- Don't use the passive voice [i.e., the passive voice should not be used] except in rare instances. Similarly,
- Use real, concrete subjects. Don't say, 'the movement decided . . .' Only people can decide stuff.
- 'Lose' unnecessary verbiage. Most editorial passes can strike out 25% in the form of clumps of rhetorical padding that slows down the reading and obscures your point (and does not help your grade in the long run). Don't say 'What King believed was that' when all you need to say is 'King believed.'

Imagine that you are writing for an (otherwise) intelligent reader who has not had the privilege of taking PACS 164. Explain all technical terms that are not in public discourse. (In fact, many of our papers end up in *PeacePower* or, say, the *New York Times* ☺.)

So much for quality. These papers should normally be at least six pages (unless they're so brilliant that they don't need to be) and less than fifteen (so we can handle them). If you see your paper as part of a large project, as students often do in this course, just give us a workable chunk for now; we'll be happy to work with you on the Great Idea after the course. For your final draft, please instruct your word processor to *number the pages*! As for footnotes, use any standard and consistent scheme to document your references (unless it's a brilliant reflection on something that doesn't need any). By and large, print references are more reliable and easier to check than websites, etc. If you are stating something you believe to be true (and believe that I agree with you) but is not self-evident, do tell us who is speaking. Don't just say 'nonviolence always works' as though it were not controversial.

Finally, don't hesitate to talk with any of us at any point in your writing process, and **start early**! Good luck, we look forward to seeing what you come up with.

Other Resources

In addition to the Powers & Voegelé encyclopedia in the Library (see Bibliography), and the bookshelf in the foyer of the PACS/IASTP area, what follows is a short list of other resources; others will be added to the course web site (please bring items you find useful to my attention).

Note: The computer dedicated to student use in the IASTP area or downstairs lounge, 20 Stephens, should have the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* on its hard-drive, searchable by key terms. A similar resource for Martin Luther King, Jr. is www.stanford.edu/group/king.

I. Organizations and Web sites

www.mettacenter.org has links to other nonviolence sites, and see <http://pages.prodigy.net/gmoses/nvusa/index.htm>, with links to syllabi, etc.
www.nonviolenceworks.net — a particularly useful site maintained by Pat O'Connell in San Jose.

<http://www.lionlamb.org>

Lion & Lamb works to stop the marketing of violence to children, i.e. by toys or videogames.

Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space PO Box 90083, Gainesville, FL. 32607(352) 337-9274. <http://www.space4peace.org> globalnet@mindspring.com

A few organizations that work to support women in making peace:

Mobilized Mothers

"Mobilized Mothers" describes hundreds of organizations that are led by women trying to influence foreign policy outcomes in conflict situations. For the growing frequency of women in govt. programs see the Women Waging Peace program.

<http://fly.hiwaay.net/%7Egarson/mothers0501.htm>

and

<http://www.9-11peace.org/r.php3?redir=62>

Some innovations in Conflict Resolution:

The **Compassionate Listening Project**, founded in 1996 by Gene Knudtsen Hoffman, has trained hundreds of American participants to listen to thousands of Israelis and Palestinians with the intention of discovering the human being behind the stereotype. No one has declined a listening session. They have listened to settlers, sheikhs, mayors, rabbis, students Bedouins, peace activists and terrorists. "An enemy is one whose story we have not heard" (GKH).

Their main site: <http://www.coopcomm.org/listening.htm>. See also, <http://www.mideastdiplomacy.org/>

The annual **Agenda for Reconciliation** conferences in Caux, France have drawn people from over sixty countries in recent years. Many come from situations of tension, others from areas of open conflict, and still others struggling to rebuild after conflict. Currently, AfR encourages ongoing efforts of nation-building, peace-making, and reconciliation in Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, Africa and the Middle East. <http://www.caux.ch/afr/afactivities.html>

A page of the U.S. Institute of Peace web site with information about how to look for an archived web cast of the public panel discussion on nonviolent struggles against repressive regimes, held early January, 2002 as a follow-up to a conference co-hosted by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (producers of *A Force More Powerful* and *Bringing Down a Dictator*) http://www.usip.org/oc/events/nonviolent_struggles.html

A list of books by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship will be found at <http://www.powells.com/ppbs/29799.html>.

The site for the Nonviolent Peaceforce is **www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org**.

II. Magazines, newsletters, etc. (also check our section of the PACS bookshelf in Stephens)

Peacework: Global Thought and Local Action for Nonviolent Social Change; published monthly by the New England AFSC regional office. Online at www.afsc.org/peacework.

Fellowship; bimonthly publication of the related Fellowship of Reconciliation (Nyack, NY)

YES! a Journal of Positive Futures is put out quarterly by the Positive Futures Network, Bainbridge Is., WA. It occasionally has articles directly on nv. topics, and always ones relevant to a sustainable, democratic future.

A particularly pertinent — and controversial — issue of *Satya*, a Magazine of Vegetarianism, Environmentalism, and Animal Advocacy will be found at <http://www.satyamag.com/apr04/churchill.html>.

Nonviolence Today: Bibliography

Note: Powers & Vogele, below, is an extremely helpful non-circulating resource. Useful for papers!

Ackerman, Peter and Krueger, Christopher. *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993.
FWD. BY GENE SHARP. FOLLOWS PRETTY MUCH THE FORMAT OF A *FORCE MORE POWERFUL*.
LAST CHAP. HAS SUMMARIES OF MANY ADDITIONAL N-V UPRISINGS, SYSTEMATICALLY ANALYZED.

Affleck, Michael, John Quigley, and Arthur Poulin. *Notes on Nonviolence: The Nevada Desert Experience Campaign to End Nuclear Testing*. Las Vegas, NV: Nevada Desert Experience, 1988.

Affleck, Michael. *The History and Strategy of the Campaign to End Nuclear Weapons Testing at the Nevada Test Site, 1977-1990*. Las Vegas, NV: Pace e Bene, 1991.

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(Series title: Syracuse studies on peace and conflict resolution)

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DESCRIBES THREAT POWER, EXCHANGE POWER, AND INTEGRATIVE POWER, OF WHICH NV FITS INTO THE LAST AND LEAST-STUDIED FORM. TRACES POWER THROUGH PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION WITH B.'S CHARACTERISTIC VISION.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977. MAJOR WORK OF AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL THEORIST WITH STRONG PRACTICAL BENT.

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Coutin, Susan. *The Culture of Protest: Religious Activism and the U.S. Sanctuary Movement*. San Francisco, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993.

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- Day, Dorothy. *By Little and By Little*. Robert Ellsberg, ed. New York: Knopf, 1983. COLLECTION OF DAY'S WRITINGS, SPANNING OVER FIFTY YEARS UNTIL HER DEATH IN 1980 (AT THE AGE OF 83). GIVES "PROOF THAT THE GOSPEL CAN BE LIVED." (ROBT. IS DAN E'S SON)
- Epstein, Barbara. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970's and 1980's*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
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- Griffin-Nolan, Ed, ed. *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991. Probably the first book on accompaniment, but most focus is on the politics of the region and little on NV.
- Harak, G. Simon, S.J. *Nonviolence for the Third Millenium*. Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. 2000. BEGINS WITH GANDHI, CONTAINS SENSITIVE AND MOVING ESSAY BY KATHY KELLY AMONG OTHER MODERN ACTIVISTS. UCB LIBRARY.
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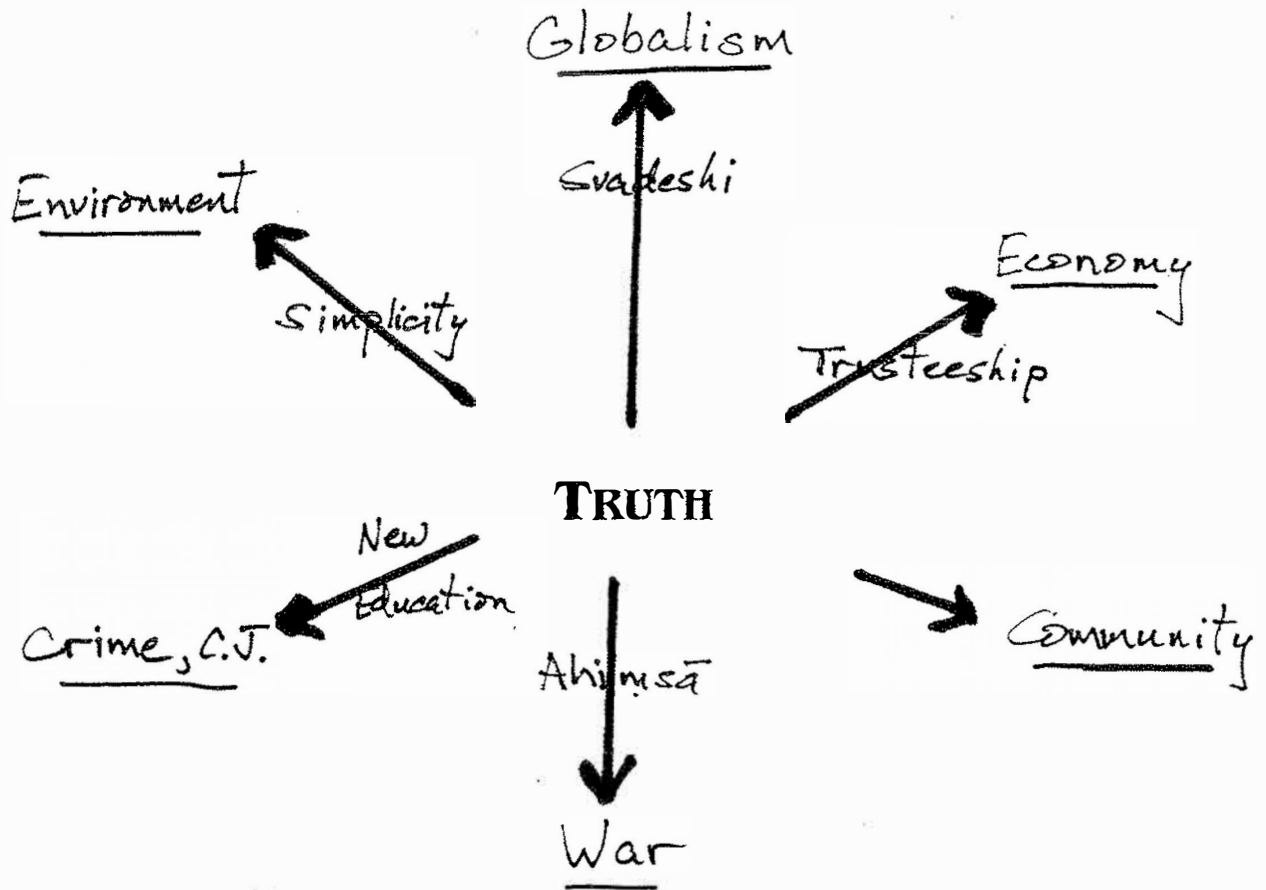
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The Wheel of Nonviolence

How basic Gandhian concepts correlate with contemporary problems



Part One: Introduction

[print this article](#)

YES! Magazine Summer 2003 Issue: Finding Courage

The Time For Nonviolence Has Come

by Michael N. Nagler

Anyone who has seen *Bowling for Columbine* will recall the scene when Michael Moore is interviewing James Nichols, whose younger brother is in prison as an accomplice in the Oklahoma City bombing. As Nichols raves on about the need to overthrow the government with force, Moore suddenly interjects, "What about Gandhi?" Stunned to silence, Nichols hears Moore say, "He threw out the British without firing a shot." After a long pause, Nichols quietly answers, "I'm not familiar with that." When I saw *Bowling for Columbine* in Berkeley, the whole audience gasped.

When I am asked, as I often am, "Can non-violence possibly work in times like these?" my answer is, "Can anything else?"

It is not that I am unaware of the problem. I know what right-wing radio talk-show hosts are doing to the minds of millions of people, how corporate forces are dehumanizing an entire civilization—and how this dehumanization is making itself felt in the streets of Baghdad and Gaza. Nor am I making a prediction; I have no idea how things will turn out. But I am optimistic about what could be, because I am aware of the yet-to-be-unleashed power in the human individual—the power of nonviolence—and because I am aware of how that power has been growing.

Jonathan Schell recently wrote that, despite a lot of noise to the contrary, the latter half of the 20th century saw brute force become increasingly futile and the power of the human will correspondingly more significant. This seems to me entirely correct. Despite, or in part because of, the appalling rise of violence, we are now experiencing the third wave of global nonviolence to uplift the modern world.

The first wave consisted of the struggles of Mahatma Gandhi, whose movement brought down a corrupt and outmoded imperial system, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose struggle uprooted an equally outmoded ideology of racialism.

The second wave was a rash of insurrectionary movements around the world, among them the defeat of dictator Pinochet in Chile, the "People Power" revolution in the Philippines, and the first Palestinian 'Intifada' (shaking-off), which, while the follow-up has been thwarted, did lead to the Oslo peace accords. Various other 'Intifadas' shrugged the Soviet mantle off Eastern Europe. While not all of these uprisings were nonviolent, many were, including in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, whose 1968 "Prague Spring" uprising thwarted a Warsaw Pact repression for eight glorious months; the country later freed itself in a "Velvet Revolution."

There were similarly popular and nonviolent uprisings elsewhere, along with less ambitious movements: The peasant-led struggle around Larzac, France, in the 1970s, thwarted government plans to enlarge an army base at the expense of grazing and farmland; European anti-nuclearism made the Green Party a force to reckon with, at least in Germany; and the Landless Rural Worker's Movement has provided over a million Brazilians with land and new forms of self-sustaining community.

In all these varied movements, oppressed people discovered they could organize resistance against a seemingly invincible regime, delegitimize it in the eyes of the public, and precipitate its downfall. While some of these movements were violent—sometimes brutally so—as Schell said, the key to their victories against overwhelming military force was the commitment of a community's will. A discovery had been made: physical force could be overpowered by will.

At the same time, will needs intelligence and strategy. Some of these movements began developing an art whose importance cannot be overstated: nonviolence training. As Gandhi said, the training for a satyagrahi, or nonviolent activist, has to be more rigorous than the training for a conventional soldier. Civil Rights activists in the 1960s used "hassle lines" and role playing to evoke and then control the anger and fear they would face on the marches, picket lines and sit-ins. Like soldiers learning to stay cool in combat by having guns trained on them, nonviolence trainees learn to stay cool while emotions are trained on them, and how to avoid triggering one's opponents' rage. Groups like Global Exchange and the Ruckus Society began to use this training in preparation for the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations in 1999, and harnessed the loose-knit, democratic "affinity group" structure, which first arose, appropriately, in the early struggles against fascism in Spain and was developed further in U.S. anti-nuclear campaigns.

We are now in the third wave of nonviolence, consisting of the world-wide movement against corporate globalization and, of course, the global anti-war movement that has sprung up with astonishing speed and effectiveness to meet the equally astonishing new arrogance of the U.S. government.

http://www.yesmagazine.org/other/pop_print_article.asp?ID=618

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What marks this third wave is that it is self-consciously global and, while the movement may not yet have fully articulated a positive vision, the millions who turned out to oppose war were aware that they possessed a different kind of force from that of the world's military powers. This dawning awareness that there is another kind of force strengthens the tendency to nonviolence. That will become clearer, I think, as both the militarism and the resistance wear on, confronting the world with a stark choice.

Violence undermines itself

When necessary, this is just what nonviolence does: It forces violence into the open, causing violent regimes to undergo the "paradox of repression," increasing the naked force they must exert to maintain control until it is unacceptable—to the oppressed, to the community that must maintain the force, and to the watching world. The crushing to death of Rachel Corrie by an American-made bulldozer in Gaza last March might be forgotten in the focus on Iraq, but now two others from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), Brian Avery and Tom Hurndall, have been shot. The very violence of the militarism that caused these crimes, especially in a time of global communications, will prove its undoing.

The power of nonviolence is insistently surfacing now, even where resistance movements seem to have lost sight of it. An image comes to mind from recent protests in San Francisco: tension was building along a street where a sprinkling of "black bloc" demonstrators were taunting the police, much to the dismay of the majority of protesters. At first no one noticed a Buddhist monk standing at the back of the crowd, but he slowly made his way forward (despite his own considerable fear, I learned later) and stood, a dramatic figure in yellow robes and shaved head, before each policeman in turn, smiling at him or her and bowing with folded hands. Even before he reached the Asian officer who involuntarily greeted him in turn, the tension had melted.

At the heart of nonviolent action is the power of the individual, a model for revolution expressed in Mother Teresa's Bengali formula, *ek ek ek* ('one by one by one'). Yet I have just been describing the growth of institutions of nonviolence. What has been discovered is that organizations can be designed to draw forth the energy and creativity of the individual, rather than suppress them as cogs in the corporate machine. This is democracy in the deepest sense.

Among the structures that are building on the power of each individual is the Nonviolent Peaceforce (which I reported on in YES! Fall 2002), which plans an international army of nonviolence.

The ISM, too, even as some of its members have died, has been demonstrating the power of moral courage and clear vision. Jennifer Kuiper, who was in Palestine with the ISM when the recent killings of internationals occurred, said, "We aren't simply fighting against violence but for an alternative vision of the world. A world that rejects weapons in favor of intellect and heart. If we can't imagine it, how can we create it? If we don't create it, how will we transform our dreams into substance? If not us, then whom?"

In a Native American story that has become current of late, a grandfather tells his grandson that two wolves are battling inside him; one ferocious and destructive, the other gentle and powerful. When the child anxiously asks, "Grandfather, which of them will win?" he replies, "Whichever one I feed."

Gandhi and King's movements roused the hidden power of the downtrodden, leading to a wave of insurrections against specific regimes. Over time, awareness of this power has percolated through the globe, spreading exponentially faster as communications grew, until now we have reached a global awareness of nonviolence and of the interconnectedness of global problems that I'm calling the third wave. It presents us with a hope and a challenge. If the first two waves showed that communities united in will could overcome brute force, the third wave shows a tantalizing vision of what the whole world community, united in will, could achieve.

As Robert Muller has said, there is not one superpower in the world today, but two: the militarized United States on the one hand, and the millions of ordinary people, including many Americans, who yearn to devote their energies to a humane future. Which will win? Militarism, with its thinly disguised imperial agenda, or the awakening power of human will and consciousness? Fear or love? If we feed the new awareness of nonviolent action, with its spiritual dimension, its focus on empowering individuals, its grassroots forms of organizing, and the knowledge that each of us possesses what Gandhi called "the greatest force humankind has been endowed with," there is no question that it will be love.

Michael Nagler is professor emeritus of classics and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-founder of its Peace and Conflict Studies Program. He is the author of *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, which won a 2002 American Book Award.

A conversation with Michael Nagler

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http://www.alumni.berkeley.edu/Alumni/Cal_Monthly/December_2001/QA-_A_conversation_with_Michael_Nagler.asp

A veteran of the peace movement explores the meaning of nonviolence, the response to September 11, and the purpose of education

By Russell Schoch

According to the founder of Berkeley's Peace and Conflict Studies program, this is the best of times and the worst of times for a movement toward peace. The worst, says Michael Nagler, because when people are afraid, as many are after September 11, the last thing they want is change; the best because a growing number of people around the world are sensing that violence is not the answer to the world's ills and may, in fact, be the cause. With his new book, *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future* (Berkeley Hills Books), and his current position as chair of PACS, Nagler has been interviewed frequently since September 11, as often as six times in a single day.

Nagler came to Berkeley in 1960 as a graduate student in the new department of comparative literature. Already a "peacenik" upon his arrival, he was deeply involved in the Free Speech Movement and took part in various efforts to reform the educational system. (One indication of the changes that have taken place during Nagler's career: In 1962, he was stopped by a *Daily Cal* reporter who asked why he was wearing a beard.) After earning his master's and Ph.D. degrees, in 1966 he became a regular faculty member, splitting his time between classics and comp lit.

A key moment in Nagler's life took place in 1967, when he met a visiting scholar, Sri Eknath Easwaran, who was teaching meditation. He became Nagler's mentor and the leader of an ashram in West Marin, founded in 1970, where Nagler still lives. Nagler found that being an intellectual was not the only way—perhaps not always the best way—to answer life's most important questions. Studying and meditating under Easwaran also led to Nagler's lifelong interest in the work and thought of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi's teachings, he says, enabled him to harmonize his spiritual and political yearnings. "For me, nonviolence was the bridge between spirituality and the desire for political justice," Nagler says. "Nonviolence has been my central focus as a thinking person ever since." He was amazed that there was no course on Gandhi at Berkeley, and set about to teach one. It was from that course that Peace and Conflict Studies emerged in the early 1970s.

Nagler was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1937. He imbibed a love of teaching at the dinner table, where his parents, both teachers, eagerly discussed their students every night. "Their love of children and of teaching got into me pretty deep," he says. Television did not enter his home until he was a teenager and, as an adult, he has never owned a set. In high school, Nagler joined the bohemian crowd, playing bluegrass mandolin with various folk music groups in Greenwich Village. (He remembers looking down on a young folk singer from Minnesota named Bobby Zimmerman, who has just released his 43rd album under the more familiar name of Bob Dylan.)

Nagler first studied Greek at Cornell University and fell in love. "I am a literary animal," he says. "Reading poetry, especially in difficult languages like Greek [and later Latin and Sanskrit] was the high point of education for me." He has written a book on oral poetry in Homer ("a folk singer like me"), and several articles on violence in the *Odyssey*. In conversation, he often cites his beloved classics; his analogy for September 11 is not Pearl Harbor, but the Sack of Rome.

In 1991, Nagler retired early from his position in classics and comparative literature. He was discouraged by what he calls the increasing corporatization of the University—"treating and organizing education as a business." But he has continued to teach in PACS and still gives a course on meditation.

What is nonviolence?

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Nonviolence, which is grounded in the worth and dignity of every human being, really arises from the struggle within a person to overcome potentially destructive drives like anger and fear. The results of this struggle are what I call the moral architecture for social justice and world peace.

Since the work of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., it's been estimated that nearly one-third of the world's people have practiced some form of nonviolence for the redress of grievances. This is the concept of "people power." The idea is that the power of an aroused populace is greater than the power of the state, since the state depends on the consent and the cooperation of its citizens. And when citizens rise up, as they notoriously did in the Philippines twice in recent memory, the state is powerless to stop them.

But people power is only the tip of the iceberg. The real nonviolence, in my understanding, is person power. That is, the power of the single individual. That power can be multiplied by numbers, on demand; but unless it comes from an individual, an individual's commitment, it's not there. When it is there, once you develop a nonviolent energy, you can use it in any direction.

Can you explain how this works?

I'll give you an example of nonviolence from the top: Sir William Penn ran a colony, soon to become the State of Pennsylvania, along Quaker lines. This is sometimes called the "holy experiment." Penn was in complete charge of the territory, of both the Europeans and the Indians, and in all cases he dealt with people along nonviolent lines. It went on successfully for some 70 years, and contributed to the character of American government.

And look at Gandhi's career. As we know, he was the leader of an insurrectionary movement against an established authority. That's people power—using nonviolence to influence people who have power over you. But he also urged his people, Hindus, to deal fairly with Muslims; that's horizontal. Finally, he wanted it very much to be operated downwards toward the outcast Hindus, whom he renamed the harijans or "children of God." So he was using nonviolence in all three social directions: to those "above," to those in a parallel situation, and to those "below."

You can then talk about nonviolence between husband and wife, between oneself and one's co-workers. The applications are quite limitless.

You show in your book that nonviolence has a history most of us are unaware of.

Yes. In 1909, Gandhi wrote that what we call "history" is designed not to recognize or document nonviolence. In fact, what history documents are breakdowns in the social system. Gandhi was trying to make nothing more nor less than a breakthrough in the history of consciousness, to show that nonviolent force has kept humanity alive for countless generations.

What's the difference between nonviolence and pacifism?

When you're distant from something and you don't hear about it very much—nonviolence—you tend to equate it with something you know a little about, which is pacifism. There's a bit of overlap between nonviolence and pacifism, but there's a very important difference.

The way we usually define pacifism is in a negative way: "I will not participate in..." usually a war. Whereas the real, principled nonviolence position starts from a positive: "How can I make a creative, constructive, long-term impact on the situation I'm in and, ultimately, on the world I'm in?"

What does your three decades of involvement with nonviolence suggest should be our response to September 11?

In the first place, terrorism cannot be condoned—least of all by those of us who favor nonviolence. But it can be understood. There are reasons we were attacked that day, and may be again. While the actions of the September 11 attackers were deplorable, and while al Qaeda and its fundamentalist

supporters are religious extremists, they represent only the extreme edge of a widespread resentment against our nation's policies and attitudes. To understand these things is not weakness; it's wisdom. To think, as the New York Times encourages us to do, that these are irrational fanatics who envy us because we are prosperous and democratic is a dangerous puerility.

Unfortunately, those of us who did not want a military, retaliatory response failed, and our effort was doomed to fail.

Why?

Because bombing is the default response—it's packaged, ready to go.

So what I said to my community is: Let's dig in now for the long haul. This is what my class in nonviolence has been working on; this gives my students a very, very vivid sense of relevance, because this could be the most important thing we've ever done. I told my students that what we should be calling for is some sort of modest gesture of recognition of other people's suffering.

For example?

I told them the story of John F. Kennedy's speech at the American University in Washington, in which he cited the suffering of the Soviet people during World War II. He talked about the bravery with which they fought back against Nazism.

That might seem like "so what?" to us, but no American President before or since has ever publicly acknowledged that the Russian people suffered during World War II. Ordinary Soviet citizens were walking around with copies of the speech folded up in their wallets. It was electrifying for them! What I proposed to my students was this: If we had wanted to end the Cold War, we could have done it right then. We had opened a door; all we had to do was walk through it. But, we probably didn't want to end the Cold War; and we probably didn't even know we had opened that door.

What could be said today to ease tensions?

If we could make some sort of gesture of acknowledgment—not to the terrorists, not to al Qaeda, but to the Arab world: "We recognize that we have made some mistakes, and there is a lot of suffering going on, and that we've had a role in this suffering. We're concerned about this; let's work together to redress it." That's all we would have to say, and this would completely change the atmosphere.

"We" being the administration?

Yes. This would have to be done at a high level. That human outreach would take the wind out of the sails of the terrorists.

The U.S. government is wrong in thinking that force will deter them. And wrong in thinking that nothing else will. So that's the first point we in the peace community want to make to the American people. The challenge is to acknowledge that suffering has been imposed on the Arab world and to acknowledge that we had a role in imposing it.

But what about our security?

Violence does not bring security; if history teaches anything, it teaches us that. If we succeed in "eliminating" Osama bin Laden, others will take his place. But if we eliminate the grievances that the Third World, and in particular the people of the Mideast, have against us, why should they hate us? Security comes from well-ordered human relationships; it does not come from bomb-sniffing dogs and high-tech spy satellites.

Every time we have pursued violence to further our interests in other countries—supporting Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban—it has rebounded to harm us—what the CIA calls

“blowback.” If we truly want to be secure, we must understand why we’re hated and take steps to correct it.

What steps do you suggest?

There are three areas. In policy, we have to look particularly at our behavior in Israel-Palestine, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, where we have supported the autocracy since 1943. In lifestyle, we cannot go on consuming global resources, particularly oil, at an unsustainable rate. Bike to work! A third area is in our culture. Since commercial television became available in 1946, we have created a culture of violence. We cannot possibly expect to escape violence unless we change that culture. Intuitively, there is a close connection between the cultivation of violent imagery—in movies, in television, on the “news”—and the experience of more and more violence in the real world—a connection which scientific studies have confirmed repeatedly. And that culture of violence has led to a politics of cruelty.

I’m reminded of a friend of mine, a former diplomat under President Carter, who resigned from the diplomatic corps because of what he called the “radical disconnect” between the basic decency of the American people and the frequent cruelty of the policies carried out in their name. Now that this cruelty is coming back to be visited upon us, the American people, it is time for every one of us to start making changes in lifestyle, in cultural participation—entertainment and “news” choices—and in political decisions.

But if we were to do nothing, how would that help?

I’m not talking about doing nothing, and I’m not even saying we shouldn’t fight back. I’m saying instead that we should not fight back with the same weapons the attackers used: violence. The choice between violence and doing nothing is a false choice; it shows an extreme poverty of imagination.

How can one reason with terrorists?

The same way you reason with non-terrorists: by respecting their humanity and listening to their complaints; that opens the dialogue. We have done the exact opposite: stigmatized them as fanatics at best, and “varmints” at worst. This makes understanding impossible.

So what do you recommend?

In the short term, we in the nonviolence community recommend treating the September 11 attack as what it is—an international crime. That means turning it over to international mechanisms for appropriate punishment. The U.S. can make its intelligence services available to the international authority, and even its armed forces, if matters come down to a forcible extradition. We do not recommend bombing at a distance—which is taking the role of judge, jury, and executioner into our own hands and visiting punishment on a whole population.

How does one become nonviolent?

What I’ve come to believe, as I mentioned earlier, is that nonviolence begins with the struggle of an individual with his or her own negative state and then converting it into its corresponding positive. Let’s say something happens and you get angry. You “want” to lash out. If you do, you will be doing violence. And if you swallow the anger and run away, you will also be doing violence.

To yourself?

Yes. And you’re also reinforcing the other person’s anger. But if you struggle with that anger, and treat it not so much as the emotion—anger—but as a raw energy, and you find a way to express it as work, as a creative intervention in the situation, then that is nonviolence. I give the example in my book of my teacher, when he was infuriated at the cramped quarters of a caged bear in India; while my teacher’s friend was threatening to get a gun and kill the bear’s owner, my teacher rushed around to provide for a bigger cage for the bear. A nonviolent solution.

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Why would people decide to take such a step?

Because on some level they have an inkling that the world is not a "win-lose" place, and that they are not separate from other people. And if you use violence toward others, for whatever reason—however much it may be justified—you will be hurting yourself.

We sometimes hear that violence is built in, that there's a biological basis for it.

No, there is not. That's an old myth. Twenty top behaviorists gathered under U.N. auspices to produce a document in 1983, the Declaration of Seville, which exploded the false science that had been used to suggest that there's a biological, and therefore inevitable, basis for violence.

Behaviorist Frans de Waal—who's not a nonviolence advocate, just a good scientist who knows what he sees—describes a very poignant moment of observing chimpanzees in the Arnhem Zoo [in Holland] reconciling after a quarrel. He wondered what the literature had to say about this. And of course he found nothing. There were reams and reams about how chimps get into fights, but nothing about how they get out of them. It's just not something that is studied.

Why is violence so accepted today?

Because most people are critically uneducated about the major issues that face humanity in the 21st century. I believe, with Gandhi, King, and others that the choice between violence and nonviolence is the most important choice facing every person and society today.

Not realizing this, and lacking crucial information about the world, is what makes it possible for very decent people who do not kick their dogs or beat their wives to come up with nothing but "Bomb them!" when they've been hurt. And to fail to respond when they hear that 5,000 children a month—roughly the number who died in New York on September 11—are dying in Iraq as a result of U.S.-imposed policies.

A friend of mine has a radio talk show in Sonoma. She was talking about Iraq, and a man called in, absolutely furious. "What are you talking about?" he said. "We haven't done anything in Iraq." She quietly pointed out that we bombed their water system, on which they absolutely depend, causing people to boil sewer water to drink, and that 5,000 children a month are dying from preventable diseases.

The man asked, "Where are you getting those figures?" She replied: "That figure comes from UNICEF." And he said: "Oh...my...God." He just stopped in his tracks. He had not known this.

Your point is that ignorance—

It's a form of ignorance. Lack of information. Now, mind you, it's slightly willful ignorance. By which I mean that when people start to see these facts, they intuit where those facts are going, and this creates cognitive dissonance. And the next thing you know, that fact isn't there, or it's argued away.

What we in the peace movement have to do is very patiently articulate to people that we have been causing suffering and we don't have to. I don't believe in holding up a sign saying "The U.S. is the most violent government in the world!" On the level of facts, this may be true; but it's very counterproductive to say that.

Whereas it can be very productive to give a list of nonviolent alternatives to our current policies, and to present them in a way that people can accept them. That's what I'm asking the peace movement to do: to patiently educate.

Let's talk about this subject more broadly. I know you have strong feelings about education.

I started realizing that something was going wrong with education quite a long time ago, but it took me

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quite a while to realize how big it was: nothing less than a loss of a sense of the purpose of education. There was no discussion, no statement, no vote; but the next thing you knew everyone from the University president to the students were assuming that the only purpose of learning was to get a job.

What, in your opinion, is the purpose of education?

In my mind, the purpose of education is to enable human beings to develop to their full potential, intellectually and spiritually. That means that students have to be empowered to pursue self-knowledge and the skills that will help them be of service to their fellow human beings. Education should encourage people to develop their curiosity about life; above all, it should not trivialize either the students or their lives.

A basic problem is the centuries-old commitment to materialism: The idea that you can explain everything as the motion of material particles. This is so alienating, both to the teacher and to the student, for one reason because it leaves purpose and questions of meaning outside the educational gate. At a meeting a few years ago, the religious scholar Huston Smith said that we will not make any further progress until we figure out who we are. Right now, he said, we don't have a clue about who we are.

And you're doing something about this?

I took a chance. I said, I bet that kids coming into this University are as sick and tired of trivialization as I am. They don't want reductionism. They don't want a material explanation of everything. They don't want only financial inducement; they are hungry for awareness.

So I invented a freshman seminar called, "Why are we here?" Subtitled: "Great readings on the purpose of life." The first time I taught it, a few years ago, I said: You can interpret this course in any way you want. You can say, "Why are we in this class?," "Why are we here at Berkeley?," or "Why are we on this planet?" They all picked: "Why are we on this planet?"

This told me that young people coming here are hungry to grapple with the major issues of human existence. They are trying to escape from the trivialized, tinsel culture of the mass media. And, unfortunately, what they mostly find here, and in other universities, is an intellectualized version of that reductionism.

Do you believe that nonviolence can improve the human condition?

I absolutely believe that. St. Augustine said, in Book 19 of The City of God, that peace is the deepest aspiration of the human spirit; that peace is a good that does not have to be described in terms of another good. The very name of peace, he said, falls so sweetly on the ear that you do not need to give it any other value.

So I feel, and people of my persuasion feel, that we're actually closer to the core of what human beings are all about. And that very often people want us to help them, even when they're vilifying us as unpatriotic and so forth. And we do stand ready to help.

'You reason with terrorists the same way you reason with non-terrorists: by respecting their humanity and listening to their complaints.'

END

Therapy

We have already described seven policies as exits from the retaliation cycle. Had they been practised some months earlier, or even some months after ... But they were not, and the killing continues. What would be the concrete circumstances under which another course of action by one side could have produced a basic change in the other?

Let us this start time with OS, the other side, the Osama side. The Gandhian action on 11 September would have been to organize, with the same precision and synchronization, and on a global scale, massive demonstrations around all US/Western/Japanese embassies in the world, surrounding them by the thousands, totally non-violently, presenting the facts of global injustice, inviting dialogue. And not only the economic exploitation but all dimensions of class: the political monopolies and manipulation in Palestine and Afghanistan, the military violence in Iraq and elsewhere, the cultural domination through the media and other means, the sacrilege in Arabia.³⁰

And there would have been a massive world boycott of the goods and products from the most objectionable, least socially and ecologically conscious, global corporations that same day, combined with promotion of concrete action for an economy privileging basic needs for the most needy; all of this far beyond Seattle, Gothenburg or Genoa. The demand would be for dialogue between people and government, assuming that they, democrats all, will never fear meeting the people.

Would this have an impact on the hard, corporate US/West backed by police and military power? In the longer run yes, and it would have saved thousands of lives in New York, Washington and throughout Afghanistan. Soon, maybe many, many more.

What are the steps on the road for that 'longer run'? We know them already thanks to two excellent and recent models: the end of the Vietnam War, and the end of the Cold War.

In both cases two factors were operating. There was heavy resistance to the ferocious fighting in Vietnam and the nuclear arms race in the Cold War, both processes going on unabatedly. And there was a strong, tenacious, ever-growing, world-wide movement against the war and against both the (nuclear) arms race and the repression in the post-Stalinist countries. Violent governmental action and non-violent civilian counteraction, in other words; with the latter gaining the upper hand, stopping the war and temporarily the arms race.

Will it be possible to mount a giant North-South peace movement, addressing both sides, like the giant West-East peace movement? Building on the old and new peace movements in the

North, the anti-globalization movement, and the movements critical of both terrorist and repressive tendencies in Muslim societies? Probably yes. And the second condition is already there: just as in the other two cases, the US has picked a struggle with no clear ending, very unlike the wars against Baghdad and Belgrade where the capitulation metaphor made sense.

And yet it is worth noting that there was a very important intermediate step in both cases: US 'allies' oscillating between the US and the peoples' movements, increasingly voicing, even publicly, some of the same concerns, increasingly reluctant to give the US a blank cheque to do whatever the US leadership deemed right.

That leads to an important point. Washington is sensitive to its own people, but works with and through governments abroad. But Washington is also sensitive to allied governments and always wants support and closed ranks. That's a major vulnerability.

When the chips are all down, like slavery and colonialism, massive global injustice is not a problem of force, counterforce and cycles of retaliation. Basically it is a moral problem. And here the underdog has the upper hand, it is low in status, but high on moral standing; and more so the more non-violently he conducts the struggle. The top dog may win the game of force, but not the moral issue – and when that dawns upon him and his allies, a change of consciousness sets in, and demoralization starts thawing the frozen heart. The game is over. And deep in their guts the better among those at the top already know this, having been brutally woken up by three planes raping three buildings: the 11 September alarm call.

But we also need some kind of mediation. At some points terrorists and state terrorists will have to meet and discuss what they have in common, not only oil, but also terrorism. A meeting on *Larry King Live* – a master of making people open up, the good, the bad and the ugly – between George W. Bush and bin Laden, or their seconds in command – is not very likely, today. But wise people could meet with both sides first, probe their goals, both those at the surface and the deeper goals, their world-views, their long-term philosophies, searching for overlaps, for ways of getting out of their vendetta-like two Albanian families predestined to kill each other suddenly recognizing that the vendetta is the enemy, not the other family. Who could be better than three wise men like Jimmy Carter, Fredrik de Klerk and Nelson Mandela? Or the pope?

They are profoundly decent. And decent people would reject all forms of political violence and feel compassion for all victims, not a tribal compassion only for their own. The world needs all the decent, good, men and women – now.

Galtung, "11 September 2001: Diagnosis, Prognosis, and Therapy" From *Searching for Peace: The Road to Transcend*