Part Five: Toward a Nonviolent Culture

Saving Our Cultural Environment

Putting the "vision" back into television

A conversation with George Gerbner

by Michael Toms

For millennia, human beings have learned about life and the world through the telling of stories. For young children, nothing can be more compelling and influential than listening to their parent read a story to them. However, with the onset of modern communications technology, storytelling has become the purview of multinational megaliths, which deliver a particular brand of storytelling through television, designed to lull us into a narrow view of the world around us. We hear much about the environmental crises in the natural world. Just as dangerous is the invisible crisis we face with the new corporate media environment.

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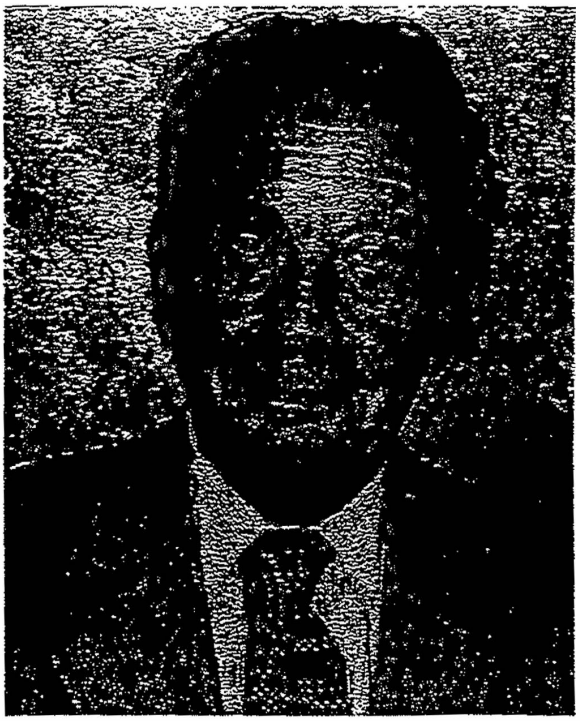

George Gerbner

Michael Toms: *George, we're all familiar with television. Most of us see it everyday; it's in our lives. How has television changed in the last fifty years?*

George Gerbner: It hasn't changed very much in the last fifty years in terms of the basic building blocks of telling stories. Prime-time network television is still what most people watch most of the time.

Prime-time television presents a world in which men outnumber women three to one; young people under eighteen are about one-third of their true proportion in the population; older people sixty-five and above, about one-fifth. It is a world driven by marketing, which prefers the best consumers and ignores those who are not the best consumers. The lower one-third of our population in terms of income and education are represented by 1.3 percent of the characters in prime-time. They are practically invisible. They are the ones who are ignored, and consequently it's their fate.

The urban crisis is never presented to us on television except as a situation of menace and fear, to be addressed by building more jails, giving longer and harsher sentences, and supporting the medieval barbarism called executions—the U.S. being the only civilized country that even has such a thing. So much of that is driven by the marketing imperative and by that feature of the marketing imperative that is most profitable,

which is violence. Exposure to violence tends to cultivate that kind of insecurity and the approval of so-called strong measures, even repression.

When you use the term "marketing imperative," probably many of our listeners think of commercials. But it's more than just commercials, it's programming.

Commercials are the least of it. In fact, commercials actually present a more diversified cast than the programs, because they're trying to sell to a large number of people, depending on the product and the sponsor. No, the marketing imperative shapes the world that is presented on television, and that shaping begins with infancy. A child today, for the first time in human history, is born into a home in which, as you mentioned earlier, it is no longer the parent who tells the stories, or the school, or the church, or the community. And in many cases around the world, it's not even programming from the native country, but essentially a handful of global conglomerates that basically have nothing to tell, but a great deal to sell. That is the great human transformation of the past hundred years.

It's pretty well been proven, although we don't read about this much in the newspapers, that violence on television really has an impact, particularly on children. It also has an impact on our society, doesn't it?

It has a tremendous impact on our society, where violence is seen five times per hour in prime time, and between twenty and twenty-five times per hour in the cartoons. Violence is always an expression and demonstration of power. The real question about violence is not "How frequent?" but "Who is doing what to whom?" That is the way we set up a power structure. For every ten violent characters on prime time, there are about ten or eleven victims. For every ten women who are written into scripts to exert that kind of power that basically white males in the so-called prime of life get away with, with relative impunity, there are nineteen females who become victimized. For every ten women of color who are written into scripts to show that kind of power, there are twenty-two women of color who become victimized.

As we grow up in this culture, unconsciously and unwittingly, we develop a calculus of risk that defines our sense of power, our sense of security. If you have a higher calculus of risk, you feel more vulnerable. You will be trained to be a minority. Minorities are not born, they are trained. They are culturally trained to be more submissive, more insecure, more demanding and dependent on protection. This is a cultural process, and violence is the prime instrument—its demonstration of power, and its enormous frequency. Ironically, sex, which is potentially a life-giving activity, is subject to much more censorship in many countries than violence, which is a life-threatening activity.

Contrary to usual popular conception, an inordinate amount of exposure to violent representations does not make people more violent, it makes people more insecure, more fearful. In fact, it's a great pacification and passivity training. I wish people were a little more aggressive. I wish people would stand up for their rights, and be more aggressive in that way. No, violence teaches them to be insecure, more dependent, more afraid. Even though I don't see the violence in my own home or neighborhood that I see on the screen, I still think that's the way the world is—mean, dangerous, and not to be trusted. Strangers are to be feared.

Now, that is the crumbling of the veneer of civilization. I define civilization as a society in which kindness to strangers is one of the key words. We are afraid of strangers; we don't talk to strangers; we avert our eyes. Our children are taught, "Don't talk to strangers." A handful of dramatic and tragic incidents have been so amplified and made to reverberate in every home that we have become afraid of strangers. We have become brutalized, and in many ways have lost what I consider to be the hallmark of a civilized life.

A common misconception is that violence is what people want. But in our culture it is the supply that determines the demand. What our public wants is what it has seen from infancy. An infant is not born with certain tastes and desires and expectations. In the first six years of life, our children are taught what to want, what is exciting, what is spectacular. Unlike any other marketed product, which appeals to tastes developed before you encounter the product, with television it's the other way around, because television integrates you into its world from infancy on.

In the average home, the television is on seven hours and forty-one minutes a day. The child is born into a television home. By the time the child has an opportunity to encounter education and create a variety of information and impressions, it's too late. By that time a child has been integrated into an essentially highly homogenized, monopolized, violence-saturated cultural environment, which is why we call our movement the Cultural Environment Movement. It's not the media that the movement is interested in challenging, it's the total environment into which a child is born, the mainstream of which is television.

"Our media environment is so homogenized, presenting so little diversity of approaches or perspectives that we are not even aware that there are other ways of looking at life and the world." —George Gerbner

We're not aware of our media environment for the same reason that the fish in the ocean is not aware that it's swimming in saltwater. Basically it has known nothing else, because our media environment is so homogenized, presenting so little diversity of approaches or perspectives that we are not even aware that there are other ways of looking at life and the world.

Increasingly, in the last five or ten years we have witnessed a monopolization of our

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Network Update, *from page 12*

KPBS-FM, 89.5, in San Diego. Write to Gary May, KPBS-FM, 5200 Campanile Drive, SDSU, San Diego, CA 92182-5400.

WTUL-FM, 91.5, New Orleans. Write to the Public Affairs Director, WTUL-FM, Tulane University Center, New Orleans, LA 70118.

Where to contact me

Write with your queries, or for a free copy of the *New Dimensions Networker Guide*, a leaflet offering guidelines on how to help bring "New Dimensions" to a station near you.

You can pass on my name and number to stations if they would like a demo tape and some background information on our regular weekly program and our other series, such as "Deep Ecology for the 21st Century."

Send to: Jacqui Dunne, Director of Affiliate Services, New Dimensions Broadcast Network, 475 Gate Five Road, Suite #206, Sausalito, CA 94965. Telephone: (415) 332-6854.

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cultural environment that was inconceivable ten or fifteen years ago. Then the Supreme Court ordered the divorce of the program producers from program distributors. Now, the three or four major conglomerates—Disney, Time-Warner, Rupert Murdoch, Capitol Cities, ABC—are telling all the stories. The greatest and the most troubling part of this is that if all the stories are told—and stories include news as well as dramatic stories; news is basically oral stories—are told from one perspective, how can we have a democratic country? How can we have a democratic political choice? Most people are not aware how unique, how unusual, how basically undemocratic that kind of a system is. In France or Italy or England or Japan, they cannot imagine that we accept and call "free and democratic" a system in which there's a monopoly of perspectives.

You cannot have a political choice until and unless there are different perspectives that are given licenses, resources and subsidies to program their perspective. In the United States we still call ourselves democratic but have only the trappings of democracy—if you don't have a socialist party, a communist party, a fascist party, a religious party, and regional parties, you have no political diversity. In fact, you have no choice. The only choice we have is between the ins and the outs. And when we vote the outs to be in, they behave and legislate pretty much like those who were in before, so it's more a question of revolving chairs with the same people and the same groups. There is no political differentiation.

The reason why there is no significant political, ideological differentiation in our country is that different ideologies and perspectives are not being cultivated. This is ironic because the framers of the First Amendment to the American Constitution said, "Government shall not abridge freedom of press," in order to retain or cultivate a reasonable diversity of perspectives. That shield of the First Amendment is now claimed by a handful of monopolists who claim the freedom to communicate, which also means the freedom to suppress everything else.

Politicians and people in Congress are so beholden to the media, so dependent on media for re-election, that they are unable and unwilling to lay down any of the laws and rules that put any limit on media monopoly. We have been brainwashed into the notion of a free market that is an unregulated market. But an unregulated market is not a free market; an unregulated market is where the loudest voices can scream loud enough to push everybody else off. It's like a town meeting without a moderator. An unregulated marketplace leads to commercial monopoly and political dictatorship.

And now comes the so-called digital system. The digital system is a very flexible new system of communication of all kinds, from broadcasting to our computers. In another ten years, most of our computers will be obsolete. We'll all go to the digital system. This is already set in motion, and the FCC has given away the existing licenses for the digital system—which is potentially much more diverse and can accommodate many more diverse

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voices—without any public discussion, without any special hearings on the issue, it has given away the licenses to the existing conglomerates, which will then go on digital.

In this country we have the ironic situation that the government can't be involved in media. We don't want to spend tax dollars to create public programming. Yet, in point of fact, our government has created the media with the way that they pass laws.

Exactly. The media are created. The Federal Communications Commission operates on a set of laws which have been passed by Congress. So the idea that government should not regulate is ridiculous, because it is regulating. But it is regulating the wrong way. It's regulating it by promoting and permitting monopoly instead of providing an even playing field for a diversity of perspectives. This is a perverse use of the First Amendment, which was designed to protect freedom of speech and to create diversity. But now the First Amendment is used as a shield by monopolists to suppress diversity.

You can go to any other democratic country, and in one week, even in one day, you can see and hear many different perspectives in broadcasting, in movies, in newspapers. In some countries this is so important that, for example, in Scandinavian countries the government subsidizes opposition newspapers because they believe that you have to have a dialectic of opposition in order to give people a choice, in order to examine every issue from a variety of points of view. We have squeezed out independent voices instead of subsidizing them.

In Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan and many other countries, the total viewing time is divided about half-and-half between public television and commercial television. Public television in the United States has never been conceived as a true choice. Legislation has arranged that it exists on a very low budget; recently there was even talk about zeroing it out, in that wild and really undemocratic discussion in Congress.

In every other democratic country, public television is fully financed; it's fully subsidized, not in a hidden text like advertising, but subsidized directly by the government. In the United States, we're brainwashed to think that government control is somehow impoverishing. In fact, if you have any semblance of a democratic country, it's government control and government financing that guarantee diversity. The ironic backlash of the First Amendment is that we cannot have a media law. Any other democratic country has a media law, a law that allocates public airways to different parties, different religious and social groups, and says, "You're going to have such-and-such a frequency, or such-and-such amount of time that you can broadcast, as you see fit." We can never do that.

What suggestions do you have as to what people might do to change the situation?

Many people are frustrated and unhappy because they see the trends that we're talking about. And when we talk to them about the Cultural Environment Movement, an organization that provides an outlet for some action, they say, "Well, I've been concerned about these things, but what can I do?" It's a difficult question. What do you do when you're in the river with a strong tide going in one direction, and you are trying to swim against the tide, or at least trying to avoid being swept downstream like everyone else? It's hard; it requires resistance, action and organization, and that is what the Cultural Environment Movement is trying to do—first of all, to become conscious of this great river in which we all swim.

If we don't see the shores, and everybody is drifting or swimming with us, we don't see that we're going in any direction. We have to say, "Yes, we're going in a certain direction," and to say, "This river is not an act of nature; it's all artifact. It consists of stories." These are the stories that we create, that we tell, that we buy, that we sell. And they exist in public space. Yes, there are things that we can do about it, and our responsibility as parents, as children, as citizens, is to become more active—not just to analyze but to organize, to try to take the public airways back into public control. We in the Cultural Environment Movement are organizing a conference, in about a year from now, to try to call attention to this giveaway of our most precious public resource, the airways.

I'd like you to describe what the Cultural Environment Movement is.

The Cultural Environment Movement is a coalition of about 150 organizations in some fifty-two countries that is working for gender equity and general diversity in media ownership, employment and representation. We think that it's a simple democratic idea, but it's very difficult to implement because it runs against the current trend toward monopolization. Essentially we are continuing in the good old anti-trust tradition of the American public which, again, has been forgotten. What happened to the anti-trust department of the Department of Justice? It doesn't seem to be working; it doesn't seem to be calling any attention, let alone putting on any brakes, to the inconceivable monopolization of cultural life and of industrial life as well.

And you are having a conference in 1999.

Yes. It will be at Ohio University, and I invite listeners who are interested. Your readers may write or email us, so we can keep them informed, and extend invitations for this international conference.

This excerpt is taken from New Dimensions Tape #2703, "The Mythology of the Media with George Gerbner" (see the full description on page 15). You may write to George Gerbner at P.O. Box 61847, Philadelphia, PA 19104 / email: ggerbner@nimbus.temple.edu

From Violence To Wholeness: A Spiritual Practice toward Wholeness

By Ken Butigan

The following is a rumination on wholeness and its relationship to "the desire for the well-being of all." This notion was, for Gandhi, at the heart of nonviolence and satyagraha (soul-force), and I have been reflecting a great deal on this recently during my two months away. For me, I am coming to see this desire – and the spirituality that grounds it and the action it provokes – as central to my own work, including my work with Pace e Bene and the From Violence to Wholeness program. I am especially moved, these days, by seeing more and more that our call to be nonviolence practitioners requires our making ongoing contact with the rich, mysterious depths of the divine longing for well-being, especially in the face of the unspeakable horror of violence. To make contact with the divine is to make contact with the divine's own woundedness and sacredness. Therein lies a deep, mysterious power able to overcome every structure of domination existing in the world and within our own souls.

May we all become modest but available channels of that power and that grace. May we be wounded and healed "wounded healers," as Henri Nouwen puts it, prepared to at least try to bring healing in so many situations of brokenness, including cycles of violence that continue to spiral down through the generations of our families, our societies, our world.

The reflection below is devoid of stories – the raw flesh and blood of our work. Those will come later. It is pretty abstract. But these surface abstractions are rooted in many experiences and lived insights. It is also very much a work in progress, especially the "elements" at the end. This is offered for our mutual reflection.

The Desire for the Well-Being of All

From Violence to Wholeness describes creative nonviolence as the desire for, and action on the behalf of, the well-being and wholeness of *all*.

Echoing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for the fashioning of an all-encompassing Beloved Community, creative nonviolence is a spiritual practice that resists the destructiveness and dehumanization of violence with active and radically inclusive love. This relentless inclusivity flows from our call as human beings to be whole as individuals, as communities, as participants in the web of life. It is rooted in the great power of creative and unifying love that sustains us all and calls us all to transformation and community.

The Call to Wholeness

We are called as human beings to wholeness. This promise of deep and flourishing well-being is rooted in the dynamics of life itself: the interconnection and interdependence of all that exists; the role that cooperation plays in evolution and survival; the profound intuition that we are all one. This summons to wholeness is echoed in our human capacity for nurturing existence, for acting with compassion and

creativity, and for respecting and safeguarding the beauty and richness of existence. Our very being is inscribed with this potential to experience the abundance of life deeply.
This call to wholeness is, however, threatened by the trauma and destructiveness of the personal, interpersonal, and social-structural violence that pervades our lives. Violence is any emotional, verbal, physical, or institutional behavior or condition that dominates, diminishes, dehumanizes, or destroys ourselves or others. It separates us from one another. It demonizes and objectifies human beings. It can short-circuit and threaten the possibility of wholeness. The violence of war, racism, sexism, economic exploitation, sexual assault, as well as personal and interpersonal violation and destruction, jeopardize our becoming whole human beings.

How, then, are we to become whole in the midst of this destructiveness?

Part of the answer may lie in a deeper understanding of what wholeness is. Wholeness is not a state of perfection or absolute goodness. It is not a utopian fantasy. It is not a type of private or individualized self-reliance, isolating us from the chaos and destruction of the world. Nor is it a form of purity, which often encourages self-righteousness, arrogance, and us-and-them thinking. Instead, wholeness is *an ongoing process, practice, and sacred gift in which the deep truth of our being – our woundedness and our sacredness, our limitations and our transcendence, our blindspots and our wisdom – is acknowledged, given space for creative expression and transformation, and shared with others*. We become whole, not through rigorous self-sufficiency, but as we awaken to, and make contact with, our brokenness *and* our richness. This compassion and gratitude for our own woundedness and sacredness teaches us to see the woundedness and sacredness of others, including those with whom we struggle. Cultivating this awareness of the woundedness and sacredness of all is a key dimension to a creative and inclusive nonviolence that desires the well-being of all. It opens the way for suspending distorted judgment, for seeing the real issues at hand, and for helping to fashion peace with justice.

Violence stands as an obstacle to our becoming authentically whole. But the response to this destructiveness is not to ignore it, accommodate it, or use counter-violence. Instead, it is a call to follow the way of wholeness more deeply than ever.

If human wholeness is a journey in which we consciously bear witness to life in its complexity, difficulty, and mystery, it therefore includes bearing witness to the wounds and violations experienced by ourselves, others, and the world. *From Violence to Wholeness* is rooted in the insight that the healing of violence involves compassionately acknowledging the roots of that violence – fear, anger, hate, greed, and the cycle of retaliatory and so-called redemptive violence that they spawn – within ourselves and others, including those with whom we struggle.

The way of wholeness is a process in which we open ourselves to life's plenitude – including its wounds and violations -- and accept the challenge to grow beyond the ego's narrow perspective so as to put into practice, over and over again, a longing for the wholeness of all.

Wholeness for All

This quest for wholeness, while experienced deeply within the life of the self, is inescapably interpersonal, social, and planetary. Our personal wholeness is intimately related to the longing for the wholeness of the world and its inhabitants. FVTW seeks to encourage and contribute to the experience of wholeness for individuals, communities, and societies. This transformation is facilitated by the creation or nurturing of reflection, action, and support groups grounded in a vision and practice of active, creative, powerful, and compassionate nonviolence. This creative nonviolence is a method for

working out and embodying the central principle grounding this work: *the desire for the well-being and wholeness of all.* This inclusive, creative nonviolence includes the following dimensions.

- Every moment of our lives we are offered the opportunity to collaborate in the replenishing of the wholeness of the world. This is especially true in situations of conflict. In such situations, we are called to be awake to the woundedness and sacredness present there and to the possibilities for healing, transformation, and the well-being and wholeness of all.

- Cultivating centeredness can help us to be awake in this way. Centering is a form of "remembering who we are." This can be deepened through conscious breathing, through being in touch with what we are feeling in the moment, and through connecting with the deep source of nonviolent love and soul-force through prayer. (One way of describing prayer is that it is "the process of making contact with reality.")

- Each situation we enter is a "scene" that has potentially many different "actors." It can be regarded as a kind of "family system" with each participant playing a particular "role." As nonviolence practitioners, we seek to overcome an "us-and-them" mentality and, instead, to facilitate a solution or agreement that meets the needs (if not all the desires) of all parties. In other words, an outcome that creates peace, justice, and well-being for the group or the participants in the "scene."

- Creative nonviolence cultivates an awareness of the woundedness and sacredness of the participants in a struggle. This spiritual practice is a process of acknowledging the dignity and complexity of all parties, coming to see the deep roots of this conflict, and fathoming the deep roots of a potential resolution.

- Often, peace and justice are obstructed by an imbalance of power between the participants. The explicit or implicit domination of "power over" keeps true peace and justice from taking root. Creative nonviolence is about creating "power with" -- the move, as peace theorist Kenneth Boulding calls it, from "coercive power" to "integrative power." In nonviolent transformation, "coercive power" – economic, political, cultural, religious, familial, interpersonal – is met with "love power" or "soul-force." This power actively resists the violence or injustice of the situation but does so by acknowledging and respecting the dignity and humanness (the woundedness and sacredness) of the one with whom one struggles. The task of the nonviolence practitioner is to bring imbalance into balance – to create a "level playing field" of mutuality where true communication and peacemaking can take place.

- Creative nonviolence holds that each of us has a piece of the truth. This means that no one side has the entire truth. Taking this seriously curbs the temptation to demonize one's opponent or to divide people into "good" and "bad." This can create an environment where the potential increases for, as long-time nonviolence practitioner Angie O'Gorman puts it, "both sides to get through the situation safely" and to create an agreement that meets many of the needs of both parties. This often means widening the field of vision beyond our own interests and seeking the well-being of the whole group in the "scene."

- In so doing, creative nonviolence opens new space for a creative and mysterious encounter. Often, creating this dynamic requires taking unilateral initiatives to end the cycle of retaliatory or so-called redemptive violence (action-reaction; retaliation; the use of so-called "redemptive violence" by the presumed victim seeking justice and redress through counter-violence). Such an approach is

designed to remove a traditional "conflict script" and to improvise a new and more human one that promotes the well-being of all parties.

- The wager of creative nonviolence is that peace and justice ultimately depends on fashioning solutions that seek and engender "the well-being of all." This, in turn, is founded on creating "scenes" of personal, interpersonal and social-structural struggle and transformation that take the well-being and humanity of all involved seriously. Such scenes ultimately rest on bringing into those scenes the inclusive, creative and audacious power of nonviolent love.

From Violence To Wholeness: An Overview

Human beings are capable of great differences and are often in conflict. The question is not whether there will be conflict -- conflict is an ongoing part of life -- but will we deal with this conflict destructively or constructively?

Active nonviolence as articulated in the *From Violence To Wholeness* process seeks the well-being of all, which includes acknowledging the differences between human beings while simultaneously affirming our deep connectedness – honoring, in other words, "difference without division." To take this approach is to shift from destructive power to integrative power, or what Gandhi named soul-force rooted in the basic oneness shared by all human beings that he called heart-unity.

A key element in this shift is to recognize that I do not have the whole truth about a conflict. I have a piece of the truth, and the one I am in struggle with has a piece of the truth. By engaging in a process that reveals these differing "pieces," we can begin to create a path toward a just and compassionate resolution that serves the welfare of all beings.

One of the key ways to do this is to open safe space for people to touch and disclose their woundedness and sacredness. We can do this as individuals and as members of small groups, but we can also help fashion such "safe space" for our entire society if we create social movements that are deeply grounded and are engendering symbols and rituals that help the populace as a whole see the woundedness and sacredness before them.

Communities Journeying from Violence to Wholeness

The greatest spiritual crisis we face today is violence in all of its dimensions. Addressing personal, interpersonal, and systemic violence and injustice requires deep personal, interpersonal, and systemic transformation. This transformation is facilitated by communities grounded in a vision and practice of active, creative, powerful, loving and principled nonviolence.

The *From Violence to Wholeness* program exists to encourage the creation and deepening of such nonviolence communities. Through ongoing shared reflection, mutual support, and experiments in nonviolent action, these communities seek to foster innovative and deeply human solutions to violence and injustice experienced in the lives of their members and in the larger life of the world.

From Violence to Wholeness seeks to contribute to the growing worldwide movement for active nonviolence that is emerging to respond to the crisis of violence afflicting the earth and its inhabitants. It strives to offer a modest sign of hope in the midst of dehumanization and destructiveness and to affirm the possibility of what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the Beloved Community.

This "modest sign of hope" depends on a deep understanding of active nonviolence. In many ways *active nonviolence* is simply a code for the process of becoming our truest selves, becoming truly human – a humanness purified of violence at its roots, as theologian Nancy Schreck suggests. This requires unleashing a profound creativity rooted in falling in love with the world, its beings, and the Ground of Love that creates and sustains all that is. This loving creativity is full of mysteries, dangers, and

possibilities, for by definition the creative outcome is unknown beforehand. We do not know what we will become. But we know that we cannot stay where we are. And we are blessed with the example of a growing number of people around the world who have been experimenting with this way of being and becoming. And though we cannot predict where we will end up or even how we will get there, we know that we must take steps toward a life that affirms the deep interconnection of all reality.

In French "From Violence To Wholeness" is translated as "De la Violence a la Plenitude." "Plenitude" happily evokes the fullness and richness of what we are called, ultimately, to experience ourselves and to share with others. But teaching such a thing is not easy. What we are doing together is taking another step to gain some sense as a growing community of how to learn these lessons ourselves so that perhaps we can invite others to do the same. In this way we will become initiators into a way of becoming human that the world is crying out for, even if it does not know it.

Guiding Principles

In the past year, *From Violence To Wholeness* has grown and deepened in dramatic ways. A number of key organizing principles have come more clearly into focus in the last year, including:

- ***A commitment to diversity.*** If separation is violence, then active nonviolence must humbly yet persistently be purified of all racism and exclusion.

- ***A commitment to relationship.*** *From Violence to Wholeness* must be more than traditional organizing, fundraising, outreach, and meetings. It must consciously nurture relatedness and the delicate web of relationships that are at the heart of our homes, our work, and our world.

- ***A commitment to inner growth and a contemplative way of being.*** Active nonviolence, ultimately, is a spiritual reality: a gift, an energy, a set of relationships that cannot be hurried, manufactured, or switched on and off.

- ***A commitment to action as well as reflection.*** In our time, nonviolence is a method for personal and social transformation. This transformation takes place where heart, mind, spirit and body are activated and are integrated in an embodied and dynamic whole. *From Violence to Wholeness* will encourage "experiments in truth" even more than ever as a way to learn, grow, change, and as a way to strengthen our nonviolence communities as well as our own awareness of the depth, power, and meaning of nonviolence in action.

Recent Activities

The *From Violence To Wholeness* Program has continued to develop and grow. The book is being used and translated in both Brazil and Uruguay, and the French translation was recently published in Montreal. Numerous programs are operating in Australia. The first FVTW weekend workshop organized by the FVTW Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender program is being held this fall in Northern California. FVTW workshops are being held in the San Francisco Bay Area to prepare people for nonviolent action at the School of the Americas in Georgia in November. The national board of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship took part in a FVTW workshop in early October, and the Nonviolent Peaceforce hosted a workshop in November in Minneapolis. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has organized over 50 FVTW events, including 18 weekend workshops.

In addition to a systematic program beginning to emerge in the Catholic community in Nebraska – the New Covenant Center in Omaha has a five year plan to train 300 people there -- it is being used by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and Latino-based community organizations in East Las Angeles and California's Central Valley. A FVTW course was held for 24 students from 17 countries at the Maryknoll Institute in New York this past July. FVTW staff has led workshops for students at the University of California, Berkeley who are organizing a nonviolent response to the current war.

These and many other *From Violence To Wholeness* activities invite us to deepen our spiritual grounding for creating peace and justice in our lives and in the larger life of the world.

Guiding Principles of the From Violence To Wholeness Process

1. ***From Violence To Wholeness acknowledge the many rich sources of active nonviolence, especially movements of poor people and communities of color who have long histories of nonviolent struggle.***

The active nonviolence we seek to reflect on in the *From Violence to Wholeness* process flows directly from the experience of many people, cultures and movements that have struggled for justice and the "well-being of all." We especially acknowledge movements of poor people and people of color who have, in many ways, conjured the vision of nonviolence and invented many of the tools to make that dream a reality. In our recent history this has included the Gandhian independence movement in India, the African-American Civil Rights movement, the United Farm Workers, the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina, the Filipino campaign to oust Marcos, and many others.

2. ***From Violence To Wholeness is a process intended to help us fashion a foundation or grounding for the nonviolent life. This weekend will give you a taste of this process and invite all of us to sharpen our skills at facilitating this process.***

From Violence To Wholeness invites ourselves and others to explore and experiment with the practice of active and creative nonviolence understood as the *desire for, and action on the behalf of, the well-being of* all.

From Violence To Wholeness invites ourselves and others to nourish the vision and power of active and creative nonviolence. While *From Violence To Wholeness* makes use of specific nonviolent methods, it first and foremost cultivates the deep foundations in which those methods can flourish.

From Violence To Wholeness invites ourselves and others to model and promote the formation of support groups whose members have a commitment to continue the study, reflection and experimentation with active nonviolence in their own lives and in the life of the world.

To these ends, the *From Violence To Wholeness* process invites ourselves and others to make contact with:

- our deepest realities, including our woundedness and sacredness, in a safe and comfortable environment
- the woundedness and sacredness of the world and its inhabitants, including those with whom we struggle
- the richness, deep sources, and power of active and creative nonviolence
- the interior experience of the spirituality of active and creative nonviolence
- personal stories of active and creative nonviolence
- historical and contemporary stories of active and creative nonviolence
- the dynamics of personal, interpersonal, and social-structural violence in our lives and in the larger world

- ways we can integrate active and creative nonviolence into our daily lives and in the struggle for peace, justice, and the welfare of all, and
- the hope that comes with engaging in the creative, transforming power of active nonviolence.

3. Nonviolence is for ordinary people in every walk of life

From Violence To Wholeness is a process for exploring the richness, power, and challenge of active nonviolence by reflecting on our own experience and on the experience of people around the world who have struggled for personal and social transformation.

Nonviolence is not for "super people." It is a way for ordinary, wounded, cranky, resilient human beings to discover their power and to create a more meaningful life. It is a path to our own wholeness and the wholeness of our world. As Alain Richard -- a former Pace e Bene staff-person who has been engaged in nonviolent activities for much of his life — says, "Just because I talk about nonviolence doesn't mean that I *am* nonviolent. I will probably not be *really* nonviolent until fifteen minutes after I am dead!"

As Alain suggests, we do not have to wait until we are perfectly nonviolent to try nonviolence. We sometimes think that we are too angry, too impatient, or too violent to try nonviolence. "Maybe Gandhi can be nonviolent," we might tell ourselves, "but I'm too volatile or frustrated to be nonviolent." The *From Violence to Wholeness* process is, on the other hand, based on the conviction that the nonviolent path is a path for everyone and it begins where each of us is.

It s an opportunity to bring our entire self to the process of living a full and meaningful life, including acknowledging our anger, fear, guilt, violence and the scars of violence -- our woundedness -- as well as making contact with and drawing on our deep, inborn capacity for compassion and love.

As Gandhi stressed, nonviolence is a continual series of "experiments with truth" through which we gradually learn how to become more human. It is not a utopian world free of conflict, but a power at our disposal to wage and transform conflicts in a human and loving and just way.

4. In lots of different ways, we've been practicing nonviolence your whole life

From Violence To Wholeness honors all the many ways you have been experimenting with nonviolence throughout your life, even if you never called it this:

- Anytime we have cooperated with someone else in solving a difficult problem, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Anytime we have felt, even for just a moment, the desire for all people to have their needs met, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Any time we have tried to find a solution to a conflict that met the needs of both parties, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Anytime we asserted your power in a way that kept yourself or the one who was threatening us from being harmed, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Anytime we found yourself exhausting all the alternatives to a situation without resorting to violence, we have been practicing nonviolence.

- Anytime we have fed another, sheltered another, clothed another, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Anytime we have hoped, dreamed, cried out, silently meditated on the possibility of a world where true peace is possible, we have been practicing nonviolence.
- Anytime we have resisted the temptation to treat someone else as less-than-human, we have been practicing nonviolence.

This *From Violence To Wholeness* weekend obviously is not the beginning of our nonviolent journey. It is a chance to reflect on a journey we have been on for a long time, and to deepen it by focusing on it with more clarity and understanding.

5. From Violence To Wholeness invites us to explore the foundational depths of a nonviolent way of life

From Violence To Wholeness offers ways to be nonviolent, but even more important than this it offers participants to explore, in a safe environment, the deeper values, wisdom, insights that help us understand both the sources of violence and the even deeper sources within the human heart for compassion, justice, fairness, equality, truth, and love. It is an "open space" to explore the deeper reasons why we might long to be nonviolent, why we might want to make the choice for collaboration, instead of retaliation? Rather than simply offering a set of techniques to resolve conflict, *From Violence To Wholeness* seeks to foster a shared exploration of the ground in which such techniques can draw strength.

A key dimension of *From Violence To Wholeness* helps encourage this journey: the process of making contact with our own woundedness and sacredness, with the woundedness and sacredness of those with whom we struggle, and with the woundedness and sacredness of the entire world.

Nonviolent Communication™

A Language of Compassion

by

Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

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WORDS ARE WINDOWS (or They're Walls)

I feel so sentenced by your words,
I feel so judged and sent away,
Before I go I've got to know
Is that what you mean to say?
Before I rise to my defense,
Before I speak in hurt or fear,
Before I build that wall of words,
Tell me, did I really hear?
Words are windows, or they're walls,
They sentence us, or set us free.
When I speak and when I hear,
Let the lovelight shine through me.
There are things I need to say,
Things that mean so much to me,
If my words don't make me clear,
Will you help me to be free?
If I seemed to put you down,
If you felt I didn't care,
Try to listen through my words
To the feelings that we share.

Ruth Bebermeyer

CHAPTER ONE

Giving From the Heart

The Heart of Nonviolent Communication

"What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart."

—MBR

INTRODUCTION

Believing that it is our nature to enjoy giving and receiving in a compassionate manner, I have been preoccupied most of my life with two questions. What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature, leading us to behave violently and exploitatively? And conversely, what allows some people to stay connected to their compassionate nature under even the most trying circumstances?

My preoccupation with these questions began in childhood, around the summer of 1943, when our family moved to Detroit, Michigan. The second week after we arrived, a race war erupted over an incident at a public park. More than forty people were killed in the next few days. Our neighborhood was situated in the

center of the violence, and we spent three days locked in the house.

When the race riot ended and school began, I discovered that a name could be as dangerous as any skin color. When the teacher called my name during attendance, two boys glared at me and hissed, "Are you a kike?" I had never heard the word before and didn't know it was used by some people in a derogatory way to refer to Jews. After school, the two were waiting for me: they threw me to the ground, kicked and beat me.

Since that summer in 1943, I have been examining the two questions I mentioned. What empowers us, for example, to stay connected to our compassionate nature even under the worst circumstances? I am thinking of people like Etty Hillesum, who remained compassionate even while subjected to the grotesque conditions of a German concentration camp. As she wrote in her journal at the time,

> *"I am not easily frightened. Not because I am brave but because I know that I am dealing with human beings, and that I must try as hard as I can to understand everything that anyone ever does. And that was the real import of this morning: not that a disgruntled young Gestapo officer yelled at me, but that I felt no indignation, rather a real compassion, and would have liked to ask, 'Did you have a very unhappy childhood, has your girlfriend let you down?' Yes, he looked harassed and driven, sullen and weak. I should have liked to start treating him there and then, for I know that pitiful young men like that are dangerous as soon as they are let loose on mankind."*
>
> —Hillesum, Etty: A Memoir.

While studying the factors that affect our ability to stay compassionate, I was struck by the crucial role of language and our use of words. I have since identified a specific approach to communicating—speaking

and listening—that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us with ourselves and with each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish. I call this approach Nonviolent Communication, using the term *nonviolence* as Gandhi used it—to refer to our natural state of compassion when violence has subsided from the heart. While we may not consider the way we talk to be "violent," our words often lead to hurt and pain, whether for ourselves or others. In some communities, the process I am describing is known as Compassionate Communication; the abbreviation "NVC" is used throughout this book to refer to Nonviolent or Compassionate Communication.

NVC: a way of communicating that leads us to give from the heart.

A WAY TO FOCUS ATTENTION

NVC is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It contains nothing new; all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what we already know—about how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.

NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of being habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on an awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention. In any exchange, we come to hear our own deeper needs and those of others. NVC trains us to observe carefully, and to be able to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. We learn to identify and clearly articulate what we are concretely wanting in a given situation. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.

As NVC replaces our old patterns of defending, withdrawing, or attacking in the face of judgment and

We perceive relationships in a new light when we use NVC to hear our own deeper needs and those of others.

criticism, we come to perceive ourselves and others, as well as our intentions and relationships, in a new light. Resistance, defensiveness, and violent reactions are minimized. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC fosters respect, attentiveness, and empathy, and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart.

Although I refer to it as "a process of communication" or a "language of compassion," NVC is more than a process or a language. On a deeper level, it is an ongoing reminder to keep our attention focused on a place where we are more likely to get what we are seeking.

There is a story of a man under a street lamp searching for something on all fours. A policeman passing by asked what he was doing. "Looking for my car keys," replied the man, who appeared slightly drunk. "Did you drop them here?" inquired the officer. "No," answered the man, "I dropped them in the alley." Seeing the policeman's baffled expression, the man hastened to explain, "But the light is much better here."

Let's shine the light of consciousness on places where we can hope to find what we are seeking.

I find that my cultural conditioning leads me to focus attention on places where I am unlikely to get what I want. I developed NVC as a way to train my attention—to shine the light of consciousness—on places that have the potential to yield what I am seeking. What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart.

This quality of compassion, which I refer to as "giving from the heart," is expressed in the following lyrics by my friend, Ruth Bebermeyer:

I never feel more given to
than when you take from me —
when you understand the joy I feel
giving to you.
And you know my giving isn't done
to put you in my debt,
but because I want to live the love
I feel for you.

To receive with grace
may be the greatest giving.
There's no way I can separate
the two.
When you give to me,
I give you my receiving.
When you take from me, I feel so
given to.

Song "Given To" (1978) by Ruth Bebermeyer
from the album, *Given To.*

When we give from the heart, we do so out of a joy that springs forth whenever we willingly enrich another person's life. This kind of giving benefits both the giver and the receiver. The receiver enjoys the gift without worrying about the consequences that accompany gifts given out of fear, guilt, shame, or desire for gain. The giver benefits from the enhanced self-esteem that results when we see our efforts contributing to someone's well-being.

The use of NVC does not require that the persons with whom we are communicating be literate in NVC or even motivated to relate to us compassionately. If we stay with the principles of NVC, motivated solely to give and receive compassionately, and do everything we can to let others know this is our only motive, they will join us in the process and eventually we will be able to respond compassionately to one another. I'm not saying that this always happens quickly. I do maintain, however, that compassion inevitably blossoms when we stay true to the principles and process of NVC.

THE NVC MODEL

To arrive at a mutual desire to give from the heart, we focus the light of consciousness on four areas—referred to as the four components of the NVC model.

Four components of NVC:

1. observation

2. feeling

3. needs

4. request

First, we observe what is actually happening in a situation: what are we observing others saying or doing that is either enriching or not enriching our life? The trick is to be able to articulate this observation without introducing any judgment or evaluation—to simply say what people are doing that we either like or don't like. Next, we state how we feel when we observe this action: are we hurt, scared, joyful, amused, irritated, etc.? And thirdly, we say what needs of ours are connected to the feelings we have identified. An awareness of these three components is present when we use NVC to clearly and honestly express how we are.

For example, a mother might express these three pieces to her teenage son by saying, "Felix, when I see two balls of soiled socks under the coffee table and another three next to the TV, I feel irritated because I am needing more order in the rooms which we share in common."

She would follow immediately with the fourth component—a very specific request: "Would you be willing to put your socks in your room or in the washing machine?" This fourth component addresses what we are wanting from the other person that would enrich our lives or make life more wonderful for us.

Thus, part of NVC is to express these four pieces of information very clearly, whether verbally or by other means. The other aspect of this communication consists of receiving the same four pieces of information from others. We connect with them by first sensing what they are observing, feeling, and needing, and then discover what would enrich their lives by receiving the fourth piece, their request.

As we keep our attention focused on the areas mentioned, and help others do likewise, we establish a flow of communication, back and forth, until compassion manifests naturally: what I am observing, feeling, and needing; what I am requesting to enrich my life;

what you are observing, feeling, and needing; what you are requesting to enrich your life....

NVC Model

The concrete actions we are *observing* that are affecting our well-being

How we are *feeling* in relation to what we are observing

The *needs,* values, desires, etc. that are creating our feelings

The concrete actions we *request* in order to enrich our lives

Two parts of NVC:

1. expressing honestly through the four components

2. receiving empathically through the four components

When we use this model, we may begin either by expressing ourselves or by empathically receiving these four pieces of information from others. Although we will learn to listen for and verbally express each of these components in Chapters 3–6, it is important to keep in mind that NVC does not consist of a set formula, but adapts to various situations as well as personal and cultural styles. While I conveniently refer to NVC as a "process" or "language," it is possible to experience all four pieces of the model without uttering a single word. The essence of NVC is to be found in our consciousness of these four components, not in the actual words that are exchanged.

APPLYING NVC IN OUR LIVES AND WORLD

When we use NVC in our interactions—with ourselves, with another person, or in a group—we become grounded in our natural state of compassion. It is therefore an approach that can be effectively applied at all levels of communication and in diverse situations:

intimate relationships
families
schools
organizations and institutions
therapy and counseling
diplomatic and business negotiations
disputes and conflicts of any nature

Some people use NVC to create greater depth and caring in their intimate relationships:

> *"When I learned how I can receive (hear), as well as give (express), through using NVC, I went beyond feeling attacked and 'door mattish' to really listening to words and extracting their underlying feelings. I discovered a very hurting man to whom I had been married for 28 years. He had asked me for a divorce the weekend before the [NVC] workshop. To make a long story short, we are here today—together, and I appreciate the contribution [it has] made to our happy ending. ...I learned to listen for feelings, to express my needs, to accept answers that I didn't always want to hear. He is not here to make me happy, nor am I here to create happiness for him. We have both learned to grow, to accept and to love, so that we can each be fulfilled."*
>
> —workshop participant in San Diego

Others use it to build more effective relationships at work. A teacher writes:

> *"I have been using NVC in my special education classroom for about one year. It can work even with children who have language delays, learning difficulties, and behavior problems. One student in our classroom spits, swears, screams, and stabs other students with pencils when they get near his desk. I cue him with, 'Please say that another way. Use your giraffe talk.' [Giraffe puppets are used in some workshops as a teaching aid to demonstrate NVC.] He immediately stands up straight, looks at the person towards whom his anger is directed, and says calmly, 'Would you please move away from my desk? I feel angry when you stand so close to me.' The other students might respond with something like 'Sorry! I forgot it bothers you.'*
>
> *I began to think about my frustration with this child and to try to discover what I was needing from him (besides harmony and order). I realized how much time I had put into lesson planning and how my need for creativity and contribution were being short-circuited in order to manage behavior. Also, I felt I was not meeting the educational needs of the other students. When he was acting out in class, I began to say, 'I need you to share my attention.' It might take a hundred cues a day, but he got the message and would usually get involved in the lesson."*
>
> —teacher, Chicago, Illinois

A doctor writes:

> *"I use NVC more and more in my medical practice. Some patients ask me whether I am a psychologist, saying that usually their doctors are not interested in the way they live their lives or deal with their diseases. NVC helps me understand what the patients' needs are and what they are needing to hear at a given moment. I find this particularly helpful in relating to patients with hemophilia and AIDS because there is so much anger and pain that the patient/healthcare-provider relationship is often seriously impaired. Recently a woman with AIDS, whom I have been treating for the past five years, told me that what has helped her the most have been my attempts to find ways for her to enjoy her daily life. My use of NVC helps me a lot in this respect. Often in the past, when I knew that a patient had a fatal disease, I myself would get caught in the prognosis, and it was hard for me to sincerely encourage them to live their lives. With NVC, I have developed a new consciousness as well as a new language. I am amazed to see how much it fits in with my medical practice. I feel more energy and joy in my work as I become increasingly engaged in the dance of NVC."*
>
> —physician in Paris

Still others use this process in the political arena. A French cabinet member visiting her sister remarked how differently the sister and her husband were communicating and responding to each other. Encouraged by their descriptions of NVC, she mentioned that she was scheduled the following week to negotiate some sensitive issues between France and Algeria regarding

adoption procedures. Though time was limited, we dispatched a French-speaking trainer to Paris to work with the cabinet minister. She later attributed much of the success of her negotiations in Algeria to her newly acquired communication techniques.

In Jerusalem, during a workshop attended by Israelis of varying political persuasions, participants used NVC to express themselves regarding the highly contested issue of the West Bank. Many of the Israeli settlers who have established themselves on the West Bank believe that they are fulfilling a religious mandate by doing so, and they are locked in conflict not only with Palestinians but with other Israelis who recognize the Palestinian hope for national sovereignty in this region. During a session, one of my trainers and I modeled empathic hearing through NVC, and then invited participants to take turns role-playing each other's position. After twenty minutes, a settler announced her willingness to consider relinquishing her land claims and moving out of the West Bank into internationally recognized Israeli territory if her political opponents were able to listen to her in the way she had just been listened to.

Worldwide, NVC now serves as a valuable resource for communities facing violent conflicts and severe ethnic, religious, or political tensions. The spread of NVC training and its use in mediation by people in conflict in Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere have been a source of particular gratification for me. My associates and I were recently in Belgrade over three highly charged days training citizens working for peace. When we first arrived, expressions of despair were visibly etched on the trainees' faces, for their country was enmeshed in a brutal war in Bosnia and Croatia. As the training progressed, we heard the ring of laughter in their voices as they shared their profound gratitude and joy for having found the empowerment they were seeking. Over the next two weeks, during trainings in Croatia, Israel, and Palestine, we again saw desperate citizens in war-torn countries regaining their spirits and confidence from the NVC training they received.

I feel blessed to be able to travel throughout the world teaching people a process of communication that gives them power and joy. Now, with this book, I am pleased and excited to be able to share the richness of Nonviolent Communication with you.

SUMMARY

NVC helps us connect with ourselves and each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish. It guides us to reframe the way we express ourselves and listen to others by focusing our consciousness on four areas: what we are observing, feeling, and needing and what we are requesting to enrich our lives. NVC fosters deep listening, respect, and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart. Some people use NVC to respond compassionately to themselves, some to create greater depth in their personal relationships, and still others to build effective relationships at work or in the political arena. Worldwide, NVC is used to mediate disputes and conflicts at all levels.

NVC in Action

Interspersed throughout the book are dialogues entitled NVC in Action. These dialogues intend to impart the flavor of an actual exchange where a speaker is applying the principles of Nonviolent Communication. However, NVC is not simply a language or a set of techniques for using words; the consciousness and intent which it embraces may be expressed through silence, a quality of presence, as well as through facial expressions and body language. The NVC in Action dialogues you will be reading are necessarily distilled and abridged versions of real-life exchanges, where moments of silent empathy, stories, humor, gestures, etc. would all contribute to a more natural flow of connection between the two parties than might be apparent when dialogues are condensed in print.

I was presenting Nonviolent Communication in a mosque at Deheisha Refugee Camp in Bethlehem to about 170 Palestinian Moslem men. Attitudes toward Americans at that time were not favorable. As I was speaking, I suddenly noticed a wave of muffled commotion fluttering through the audience. "They're whispering that you are American!" my translator alerted me, just as a gentleman in the audience leapt to his feet. Facing me squarely, he hollered at the top of his lungs, "Murderer!" Immediately a dozen other voices joined him in chorus: "Assassin!" "Child-killer!" "Murderer!"

Fortunately, I was able to focus my attention on what the man was feeling and needing. In this case, I had some cues. On the way into the refugee camp, I had seen several empty tear gas canisters that had been shot into the camp the night before. Clearly marked on each canister were the words "Made in U.S.A." I knew that the refugees harbored a lot of anger toward the U.S. for supplying tear gas and other weapons to Israel.

I addressed the man who had called me a murderer:

I: Are you angry because you would like my government to use its resources differently? (*I didn't know whether my guess was correct, but what is critical is my sincere effort to connect with his feeling and need.*)

He: Damn right I'm angry! You think we need tear gas? We need sewers, not your tear gas! We need housing! We need to have our own country!

I: So you're furious and would appreciate some support in improving your living conditions and gaining political independence?

He: Do you know what it's like to live here for twenty-seven years the way I have with my family—children and all? Have you got the faintest idea what that's been like for us?

I: Sounds like you're feeling very desperate and you're wondering whether I or anybody else can really understand what it's like to be living under these conditions.

He: You want to understand? Tell me, do you have children? Do they go to school? Do they have playgrounds? My son is sick! He plays in open sewage! His classroom has no books! Have you seen a school that has no books?

I: I hear how painful it is for you to raise your children here; you'd like me to know that what you want is what all parents want for their children—a good education, opportunity to play and grow in a healthy environment...

He: That's right, the basics! Human rights—isn't that what you Americans call it? Why don't more of you come here and see what kind of human rights you're bringing here!

I: You'd like more Americans to be aware of the enormity of the suffering here and to look more deeply at the consequences of our political actions?

Our dialogue continued, with him expressing his pain for nearly twenty more minutes, and I listening for the feeling and need behind each statement. I didn't agree or disagree. I received his words, not as attacks, but as gifts from a fellow human willing to share his soul and deep vulnerabilities with me.

Once the gentleman felt understood, he was able to hear me as I explained my purpose for being at the camp. An hour later, the same man who had called me a murderer was inviting me to his home for a Ramadan dinner.

CHAPTER TWO

Communication That Blocks Compassion

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. For as you judge others, so you will yourselves be judged...
—Holy Bible, Matthew 7:1

Certain ways of communicating alienate us from our natural state of compassion

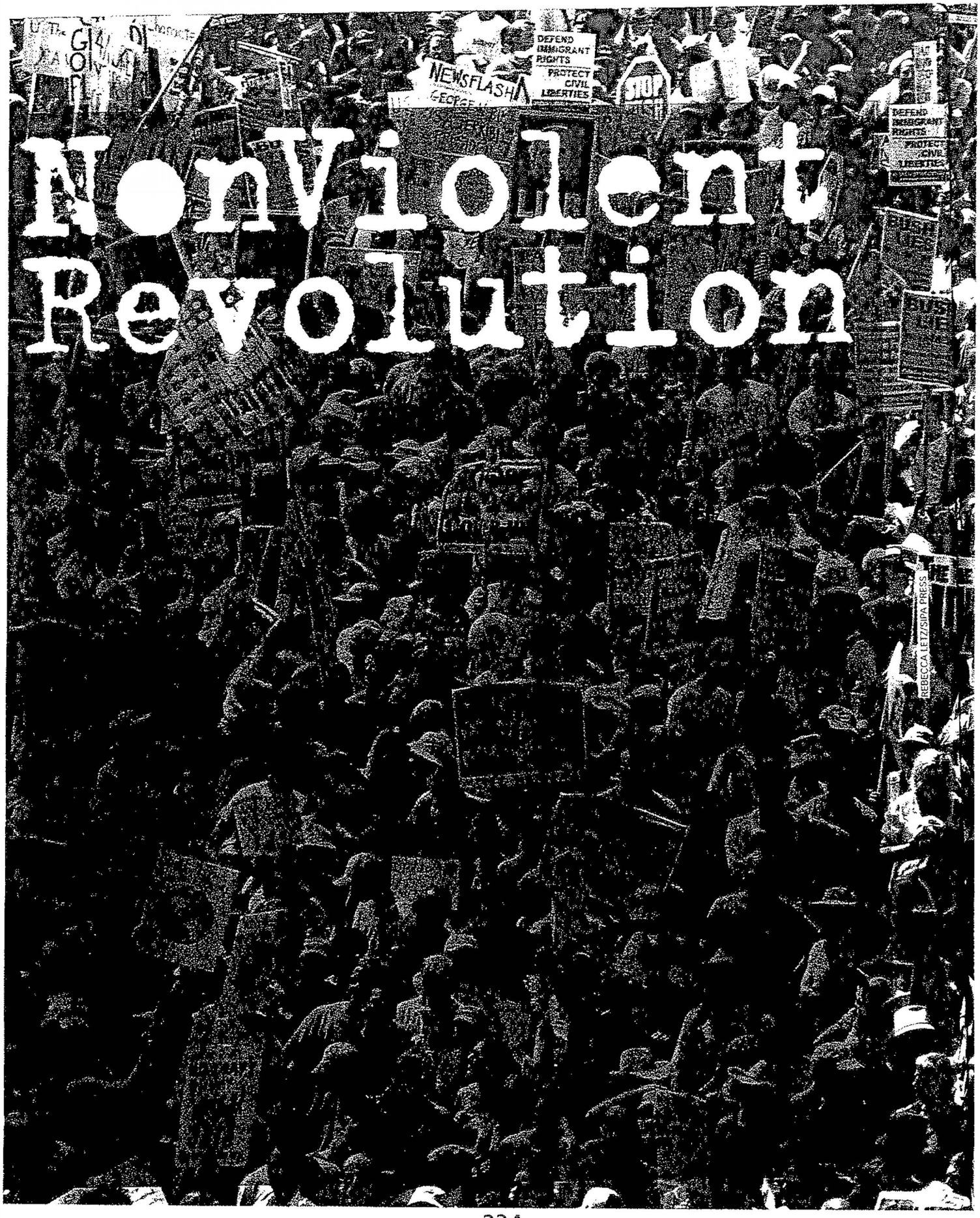
In studying the question of what alienates us from our natural state of compassion, I have identified specific forms of language and communication which I believe contribute to our behaving violently toward ourselves and each other. I use the term "life-alienating communication" to refer to these forms of communication.

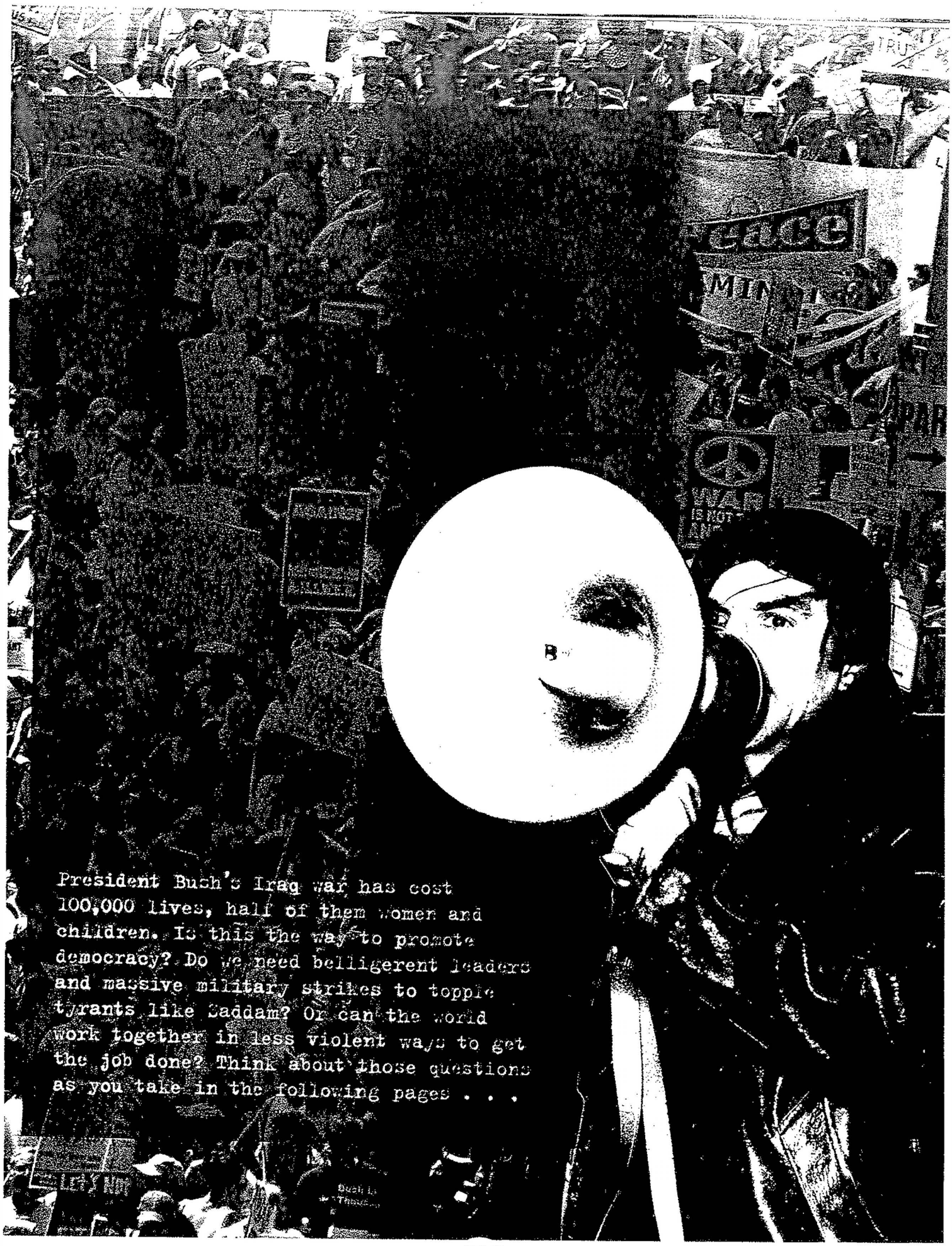
MORALISTIC JUDGMENTS

One kind of life-alienating communication is the use of moralistic judgments that imply wrongness or badness on the part of people who don't act in harmony with our values. Such judgments are reflected in language such as, "The problem with you is that you're too selfish." "She's lazy." "They're prejudiced." "It's inappropriate." Blame, insults, put-downs, labels, criticism, comparisons, and diagnoses are all forms of judgment.

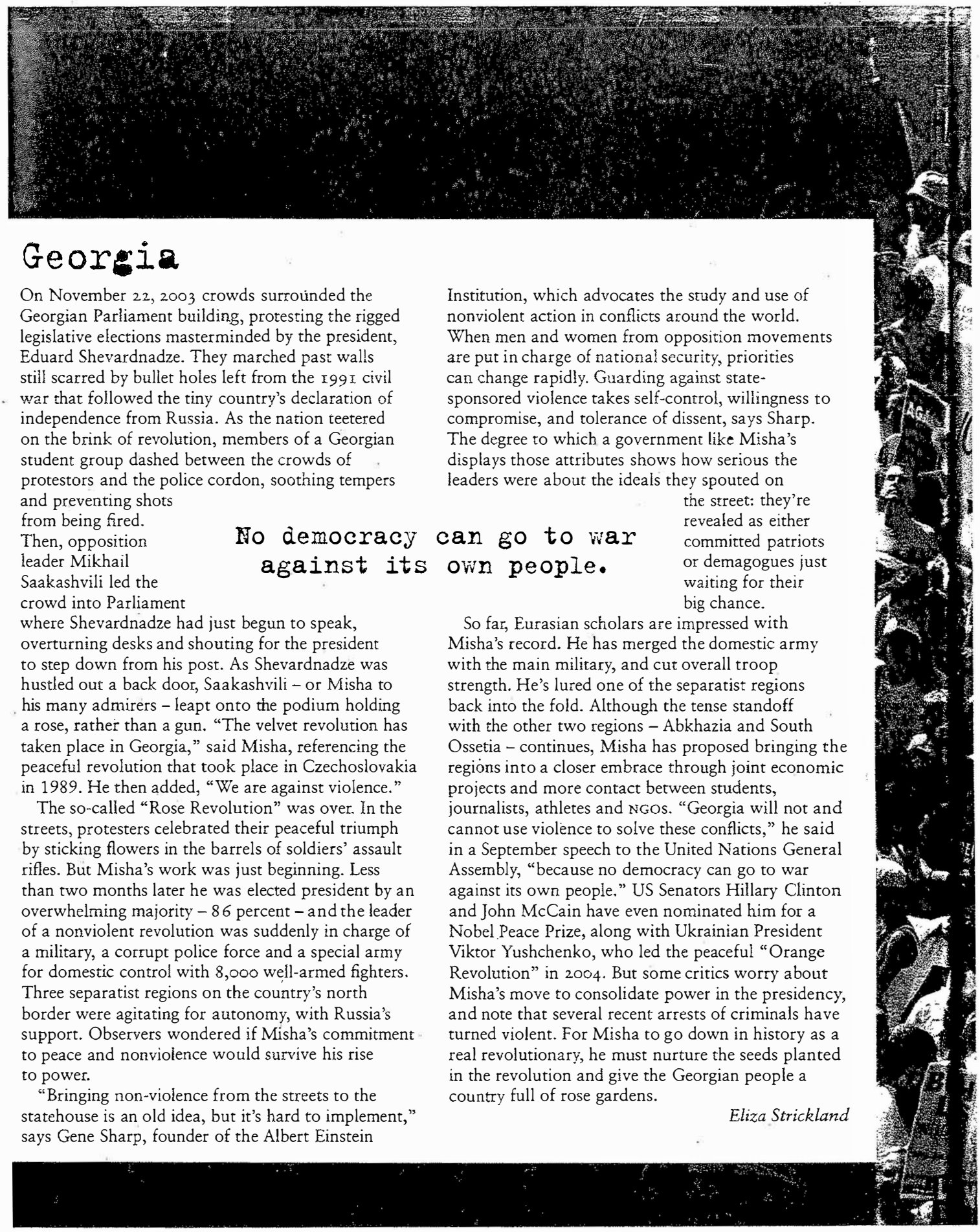
In the world of judgments, our concern centers on WHO IS WHAT.

The Sufi poet Rumi once wrote, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. " Life-alienating communication,


NonViolent
Revolution
DEFEND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS
PROTECT CIVIL LIBERTIES
NEWSFLASH
REBECCA LETZ/SIPA PRESS



President Bush's Iraq war has cost 100,000 lives, half of them women and children. Is this the way to promote democracy? Do we need belligerent leaders and massive military strikes to topple tyrants like Saddam? Or can the world work together in less violent ways to get the job done? Think about those questions as you take in the following pages . . .



Georgia

On November 22, 2003 crowds surrounded the Georgian Parliament building, protesting the rigged legislative elections masterminded by the president, Eduard Shevardnadze. They marched past walls still scarred by bullet holes left from the 1991 civil war that followed the tiny country's declaration of independence from Russia. As the nation teetered on the brink of revolution, members of a Georgian student group dashed between the crowds of protestors and the police cordon, soothing tempers and preventing shots from being fired. Then, opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili led the crowd into Parliament where Shevardnadze had just begun to speak, overturning desks and shouting for the president to step down from his post. As Shevardnadze was hustled out a back door, Saakashvili – or Misha to his many admirers – leapt onto the podium holding a rose, rather than a gun. "The velvet revolution has taken place in Georgia," said Misha, referencing the peaceful revolution that took place in Czechoslovakia in 1989. He then added, "We are against violence."

The so-called "Rose Revolution" was over. In the streets, protesters celebrated their peaceful triumph by sticking flowers in the barrels of soldiers' assault rifles. But Misha's work was just beginning. Less than two months later he was elected president by an overwhelming majority – 86 percent – and the leader of a nonviolent revolution was suddenly in charge of a military, a corrupt police force and a special army for domestic control with 8,000 well-armed fighters. Three separatist regions on the country's north border were agitating for autonomy, with Russia's support. Observers wondered if Misha's commitment to peace and nonviolence would survive his rise to power.

"Bringing non-violence from the streets to the statehouse is an old idea, but it's hard to implement," says Gene Sharp, founder of the Albert Einstein Institution, which advocates the study and use of nonviolent action in conflicts around the world. When men and women from opposition movements are put in charge of national security, priorities can change rapidly. Guarding against state-sponsored violence takes self-control, willingness to compromise, and tolerance of dissent, says Sharp. The degree to which a government like Misha's displays those attributes shows how serious the leaders were about the ideals they spouted on the street: they're revealed as either committed patriots or demagogues just waiting for their big chance.

No democracy can go to war against its own people.

So far, Eurasian scholars are impressed with Misha's record. He has merged the domestic army with the main military, and cut overall troop strength. He's lured one of the separatist regions back into the fold. Although the tense standoff with the other two regions – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – continues, Misha has proposed bringing the regions into a closer embrace through joint economic projects and more contact between students, journalists, athletes and NGOs. "Georgia will not and cannot use violence to solve these conflicts," he said in a September speech to the United Nations General Assembly, "because no democracy can go to war against its own people." US Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain have even nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize, along with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, who led the peaceful "Orange Revolution" in 2004. But some critics worry about Misha's move to consolidate power in the presidency, and note that several recent arrests of criminals have turned violent. For Misha to go down in history as a real revolutionary, he must nurture the seeds planted in the revolution and give the Georgian people a country full of rose gardens.

Eliza Strickland

Ukraine

Every revolution has its symbols: the French, the guillotine; the American, the Boston Tea Party; the Chinese, Mao's Little Red Book. More recently, as a director at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) noted, "The Czech's jingled keys, the Serbs showed a fist, the Georgians adopted a rose and now the Ukrainians wear orange." In each country, youth groups led the charge: "Otpor" ("Resistance") in Serbia, "Kmara" ("Enough") in Georgia and "Pora" ("It's time") in Ukraine. What wasn't so conspicuously cheered by Western media however, was the funding handed over by Western governments and private organizations to spur these grassroot rebellions.

In every example, a remarkably similar template is used. Well-heeled political consultants and experts descend into a pocket of eastern Europe in the months preceding national elections. Local party platforms are tweaked and synthesized into catchy slogans and sound bites for public consumption. Doors are knocked, rallies and rock concerts staged and puckish, young progressive candidates in opposition are groomed. Typically the despotic establishment, high on brutality but low on finesse, responds by quashing legitimate discourse through aggressive propaganda, media manipulation and voter intimidation with buzz-cutted thugs glowering at anyone not brandishing the resident dictator's colors. In Ukraine, tanks were already on the streets for an "early" commemoration of the country's liberation during the Second World War.

But the real excitement starts at the ballot box. International observers parachute in with foreign-funded exit polls (to quickly challenge official tallies), internet-savvy media outlets spread the news (to announce fraudulent results) and emboldened young protesters take to the streets. The world takes quick notice and after a few tense days, global condemnations roll out, local journalists find their spines as nervous police and security services lose theirs, oligarchs start to jump ship and the incumbent candidate blusters his way onto a private jet for parts unknown.

Ukraine is only the latest example of this electoral interventionism. The "Orange Revolution," also termed "the millionaires versus the billionaires," was characterized by slick and not-so-subtle PR campaigns on both sides. Whereas Russian political and industrial interests spent as much as $300 million to sway votes, a dense ganglia of organizations, from local movements to real heavyweights like Freedom House, the Open Society Institute, the British Conservative International Office, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the NED stepped in with as much as $65 million to correct vote fraud.

"Do you know who played the biggest role in Ukraine? Aside from the Russians? The Americans," stated Canadian Senator Jerahmiel Grafstein, deputy head of the OSCE observer mission. "Still, with all the foreign involvement, this election was a sea change in clarity compared to previous post-independence elections."

Traditionally, the manipulation of domestic politics was a clandestine affair, masterminded by agencies like the KGB and CIA through fatuous-sounding institutes like the Congress of Cultural Freedom, considered "one of the CIA's more daring and effective Cold War covert operations" before it was embarrassingly exposed in the 1960s. In 1983 however, the NED was established following a speech by Ronald Reagan in the British Parliament to publicly advance the cause of liberty and roll back communism. The end of the Cold War briefly threatened its existence, but it now seems to have settled into a comfortable routine of fomenting permanent revolution abroad.

In an age of MTV, nothing is sexier than young rebels with causes. Journalists at B-92 – a Yugoslav outlet partly owned by the Open Society Institute (and the first radio station to rail against Slobodan Milosevic) and at the *Balkan Times* – a newspaper set up by the US European Command – are particularly adept at provoking upheaval. Marjaleena Repo, a non-NATO-approved observer witnessed this in Yugoslavia's 2000 elections, where the US officially spent $41 million to successfully oust Milosevic: "One campaign worker for opposition candidate Vojislav Kostunica freely admitted they were taking American money since they had none of their own."

Similar turmoil in Slovakia, Georgia and Ukraine have calculated parallels for Repo. "The modus operandi is the same in every country. Milosevic wasn't moving fast enough toward privatizing everything, the so-called reforms that got rid of government controls, so the West moved against him. And Ukraine's Viktor Yuschenko is no different. He is no revolutionary hero, but a favored candidate of the World Bank."

Georgia's current president, 37-year-old American-educated lawyer Mikhail Saakashvili, succeeded in a drive to oust the widely despised regime of Eduard Shevardnadze in 2003 after a crash course in activism in Belgrade. Only Belarus has disappointed so far: in 2001, *The Guardian* noted US Ambassador Michael Kozak, "a veteran of similar operations in Central America, notably in Nicaragua," attempted another "homegrown" revolution with the student group Zubr against Alexander Lukashenka, "Europe's Last Dictator." "There will be no Kostunica in Belarus," Lukashenka snarled. He has twice since extended his presidency.

It would be a fallacy to wrap this all under a neat neo-liberal conspiracy, however. George Soros, billionaire financier, Hungarian holocaust survivor and the founder of the Open Society Institute, made it a personal mission to oust George Bush in 2004. Soros, who found an unlikely defender in the leftist *The Nation* magazine, has Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Aung San Suu Kyi from Myanmar and East Timorese Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta on the board of one of his democracy projects.

Ironically, some of the NED's most vociferous critics come from American libertarian conservatives. The Cato Institute, a conservative think tank that never met a Reaganomics initiative it didn't like, voiced its displeasure at the NED: "Through the endowment, the American taxpayer has paid for special-interest groups to harass the duly elected governments of friendly countries, interfere in foreign elections, and foster the corruption of democratic movements." Occasional frustrations have emerged publicly. Everett Briggs, US ambassador in Panama complained about NED interference during national elections there in 1984, noting "The embassy requests that this hare-brained project be abandoned before it hits the fan." When the president of the NED's Republican Party branch issued a statement supporting the coup against Venezuela's Hugo Chavez in 2002, he was soundly rebuked by NED president Carl Gershman after the coup fizzled 48 hours later. Arch-conservative Republicans Pat Buchanan and Ron Paul have called for an investigation into American involvement in Ukraine's supposedly free elections, the latter stating, "Unfortunately, it seems that several US government agencies saw things differently and sent US taxpayer dollars into Ukraine in an attempt to influence the outcome. It is our job here and now to discover just how far we have violated this very important principle, and to cease any funding of political candidates or campaigns henceforth."

Still, NED-led efforts have, on occasion, been overwhelmingly noble, such as campaigns against Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1988 (after the US installed him there in a coup in 1973) and anti-apartheid efforts in South Africa. Ultimately, Ukraine may be just the latest front in a bureaucratic, Byzantine war of twenty-first century media spin. And an entirely unnecessary one. Jake Rudnitsky, of the nominally cynical *Exile* magazine in Moscow, writes: "It's a fact that Yuschenko would have won the election if it had been violation free. Anyone who claims otherwise is either a fool or getting paid by the Russians." While he admits there is some truth to American influence in eastern Europe, the hundreds of thousands demonstrating in Kiev's bracing cold, like those in Beirut's temperate February, were "there out of their own homegrown sense of outrage, not because some State Department bureaucrats willed them there." Disenchanted with leftist media support for incumbent rulers in eastern Europe, he continues, "their role is in opposition to the West, and generally only in support of dictators . . . the left has shown that it is willing to sell out its own ideals just to take a cheap jab at the things it hates back home."

It's clearly a mixed bag, but at the end of the day, the nature of American foreign policy makes it hard not to be cynical about Washington's meddling in other countries. Promoting democracy abroad is a positive endeavor. Doing it in such a hands-on manner is the dubious part. But there's more to come. Look for rumblings further east in this electoral cold war as the excessively corrupt central Asian republics go to the polls later this year.

Sam Singh is a freelance journalist who spent over a year living in Ukraine and traveling around western Europe.

Why Not Here?

This is the most powerful question in the world today: Why not here? People in Eastern Europe looked at people in Western Europe and asked, Why not here? People in Ukraine looked at people in Georgia and asked, Why not here? People around the Arab world look at voters in Iraq and ask, Why not here?

Thomas Kuhn famously argued that science advances not gradually but in jolts, through a series of raw and jagged paradigm shifts. Somebody sees a problem differently, and suddenly everybody's vantage point changes.

"Why not here?" is a Kuhnian question, and as you open the newspaper these days, you see it flitting around the world like a thought contagion. Wherever it is asked, people seem to feel that the rules have changed. New possibilities have opened up.

The question is being asked now in Lebanon. Walid Jumblatt made his much circulated observation to David Ignatius of The Washington Post: "It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq. I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago, eight million of them, it was the start of a new Arab world."

So now we have mass demonstrations on the streets of Beirut. A tent city is rising up near the crater where Rafik Hariri was killed, and the inhabitants are refusing to leave until Syria withdraws. The crowds grow in the evenings; bathroom facilities are provided by a nearby Dunkin' Donuts and a Virgin Megastore.

The head of the Syrian Press Syndicate told *The New York Times* on Thursday: "There's a new world out there and a new reality. You can no longer have business as usual."

Meanwhile in Palestine, after days of intense pressure, many of the old Arafat cronies are out of the interim Palestinian cabinet. Fresh, more competent administrators have been put in. "What you witnessed is the real democracy of the Palestinian people," Saeb Erakat said to Alan Cowell of *The Times*. As Danny Rubinstein observed in the pages of *Ha'aretz*, the rules of the game have changed.

Then in Iraq, there is actual politics going on. The leaders of different factions are jostling. The tone of the coverage ebbs and flows as more or less secular leaders emerge and fall back, but the amazing thing is the politics itself. If we had any brains, we'd take up Reuel Marc Gerecht's suggestion and build an Iraqi C-Span so the whole Arab world could follow this process like a long political soap opera.

It's amazing in retrospect to think of how much psychological resistance there is to asking this breakthrough question: Why not here? We are all stuck in our traditions and have trouble imagining the world beyond. As Claus Christian Malzahn reminded us in *Der Spiegel* online this week, German politicians ridiculed Ronald Reagan's "tear down this wall" speech in 1987. They "couldn't imagine that there might be an alternative to a divided Germany."

But if there is one soft-power gift America does possess, it is this tendency to imagine new worlds. As Malzahn goes on to note, "In a country of immigrants like the United States, one actually pushes for change . . . We Europeans always want to have the world from yesterday, whereas the Americans strive for the world of tomorrow."

Do we need Bush to change the subject worldwide?

Stephen Sestanovich of the Council on Foreign Relations wrote an important essay for this page a few weeks ago, arguing that American diplomacy is often most effective when it pursues not an incrementalist but a "maximalist" agenda, leaping over allies and making the crude, bold, vantage-shifting proposal – like pushing for the reunification of Germany when most everyone else was trying to preserve the so-called stability of the Warsaw Pact.

As Sestanovich notes, and as we've seen in spades over the past two years in Iraq, this rashness – this tendency to leap before we look – has its downside. Things don't come out wonderfully just because some fine person asks, Why not here?

But this is clearly the question the United States is destined to provoke. For the final thing that we've learned from the papers this week is how thoroughly the Bush agenda is dominating the globe. When Bush meets with Putin, democratization is the center of discussion. When politicians gather in Ramallah, democratization is a central theme. When there's an atrocity in Beirut, the possibility of freedom leaps to people's minds.

David Brooks

National Jiu-Jitsu

AFP PHOTO

Much of the power of nonviolence lies in its magical capacity to attract and persuade. In 2000, Yugoslavian citizens stormed the parliament and demanded President Slobodan Milosevic step down. Police officers not only refused to shoot at their fellow citizens, many joined the nonviolent protesters. Three years later, Georgian protesters charmed their opponents into submission by placing roses in gun barrels.

In 1990, thousands of Lebanese Christians demonstrated for weeks on end, demanding Syria withdraw from Lebanon. The Syrian army quashed the protests with tanks and fighter jets. Fifteen years later, Lebanese of all religious stripes took to the streets after a devastating car-bomb assassination was pinned on Lebanon's overbearing neighbor. But this time, the brutal act of violence tipped the balance of power in favor of the protesters. Syria weighed its options and realized that with the entire world watching, a military clampdown was untenable.

SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

When electoral fraud prevented Viktor Yushchenko from winning Ukraine's 2004 presidential election, his supporters flooded Kiev's Independence Square and stayed for weeks. Their joyous and passionate resolve caught the world's imagination night after night on the evening news. But the protesters' moment of truth came with news that soldiers had been sent to the city to dislodge them. Those who weren't prepared for the crackdown were encouraged to leave. Most stayed and braced themselves. Any hint of aggression would have given the soldiers an excuse to start shooting. But the excuse never arose.

EPA/NABIL MOUNZER

Although nonviolent uprisings rely on a certain degree of spontaneity, they do have a general formula. The mass demonstrations that serve as the climactic catalyst for victory are often the final phase of a methodically planned campaign of boycotts, strikes, and social and economic non-cooperation. Six months prior to Georgia's Rose Revolution, 1,500 Georgian opposition members visited Belgrade to learn how to replicate the Yugoslavian experience. They even used the same slogan. Others start with humbler expectations. In 1970, a group of shipyard workers in Gdansk, Poland went on strike and clashed with police, resulting in the deaths of dozens of strikers. In 1980, they tried it again, this time keeping it nonviolent. They called it Solidarity. Initially all they wanted was an independent trade union, but the movement spread throughout the country, and ten years later, Solidarity helped drive the Soviets out of Poland.

Nonviolent uprisings are a mystical blend of sympathy and self-assertion. They are a display of national jiu-jitsu. Force doesn't meet force directly and the key lies in undermining the opponent's sense of balance. They also demand discipline. Any violence on the part of the agitators will incite a violent response, most likely a disproportionate one. Still, even if the insurgents remain nonviolent, they must be prepared to endure violence. But this doesn't mean that they need to be saints or pacifists. As shown by the Solidarity example, people often turn to nonviolence after violence fails.

For many nonviolent practitioners, however, the means and ends are inseparable. While entreaties to the moral superiority of nonviolence are important, at the end of the day, ethical considerations do not trump the more concrete reality: nonviolence makes strategic sense. *Tikkun* magazine has framed the argument like this: "Every oppressor gets locked into their position as oppressor in part out of fear that should they remove their boot from the neck of the oppressed, the oppressed will jump up and do to the oppressor the same horrific things that the oppressor has done to the oppressed. If you want to get the oppressor to lift the boot, you must convince the oppressor that he/it/they will NOT face this reversal in which the oppressor becomes the oppressed."

Nicholas Klassen


ERAYTONI GARRIGA

Violence goes against the grain of the cosmos, and the future belongs to something more powerful. You can call it 'nonviolence,' but it's more than just the opposite of violence. Don't call it 'passive resistance.' There's nothing passive about standing in front of a tank to protect people you love. Gandhi gave us a word for it: Satyagraha. It is an all-consuming way of life that has been used to achieve peace and justice across the globe. But there are no guarantees, no quick and easy victories. Gandhi was clear that his work was a series of "experiments with truth."

Yet, intuitively we know that we have to stop killing each other, that we must wean politics off violence. Ultimately, the power of nonviolence rests in the conviction that military responses to conflict will become obsolete. We will see the absurdity of engaging in war and slaughter "for the benefit of humanity." We cannot create a more compassionate world overnight, but the substitution of nonviolence for violence gets us that much closer. The peacemakers will triumph and the meek shall inherit the Earth.

John Sellers

▶ 9.

Ruckus Society

Training Activists in Nonviolent Direct Action

| JOHN SELLERS |

The Ruckus Society is an interesting community of activists, a unique critter out there in the world of nongovernmental organizations, because we don't have specific campaigns that we work on. We're much more of a support organization. We do our best work and are most rewarded by being of service to different movements in environmental and human rights struggles, fair trade, and labor issues.

Our specialty is the use of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. Nonviolent direct action is any kind of action that people take to intervene with a perceived injustice. It could be something as simple as signing a petition or writing a letter or something as profound as hanging off a bridge to stop a nuclear aircraft carrier from coming into port. Civil disobedience is the conscious disobeying of unjust laws. Lots of people confuse those terms or use them interchangeably.

The centerpiece of Ruckus Society is a program we call Action Camp, a four- to six-day dynamic learning experience. We camp out in either a beautiful wilderness area or in the fringes around cities, with anywhere from 100 to 200 people. We teach

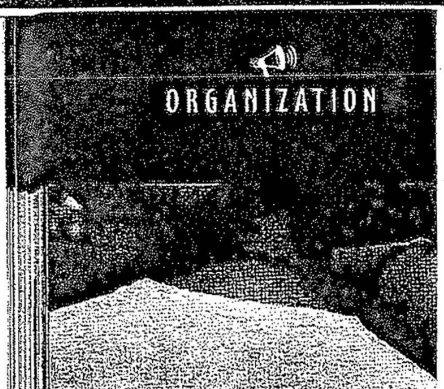
theoretical workshops in skill areas such as basic training in nonviolent direct action, the use of nonviolence, the history and strategic use of confrontational nonviolence, media for direct action, campaign strategies, direct action planning, scouting and reconnaissance, communications, and political theater. We also spend half our time in physical, hands-on training, teaching technical tree climbing, blockading, and — something we are most well known for — our urban climbing techniques. We also do a lot of role plays to try to bring as much realism in to camp as possible, so folks get an initial perception of what an action is going to be like in the real world.

Action camp is an extremely dynamic and inspiring community. People of all ages come together to share responsibility, take care of one another, share skills and gifts, and gently push each other to do their best work. We get a lot of youth to these camps, and I think they're some of the most dynamic, energetic participants we get. Many of the skills that we share at camp can be directly applied to campaigns being led by young people. Whether they're interested in the environment, social justice, or fair trade, oftentimes you see youth making the connections about globalization more powerfully than anyone because it's just so natural to them.

The Ruckus Society started out as a forest-specific organization, and we really didn't come out of the woods until 1998, when we did our first Human Rights Action Camp. Since that time, we have reached out to and been approached by so many different movements and diverse communities. It's really been an amazing growth process for us and has opened our perception of who we can be.

Part of the growth process has been the general recognition that until the movement accurately reflects the diversity of the greater

Lily Wang = Ruckus Society Action Camp



Ruckus

THE WORLD SHRINKS OR EXPANDS IN PROPORTION TO ONE'S COURAGE.
ANAIS NIN

John Sellers is director of The Ruckus Society. In the 1990s, he sailed with Greenpeace and has traveled extensively throughout North America, coordinating direct actions for Rainforest Action Network, Earth First!, Project Underground, International Campaign for Tibet, Global Exchange, and many others.

LINKS

www.ruckus.org

society in which it exists, it's not going to be a successful movement. In fact, it may even be dishonest to call it a movement — a real movement — until it cuts across the race, gender, and class boundaries that have traditionally been divisive.

At Ruckus, we paid special attention to those concerns when we planned our Action Camps in the summer of 2000 for the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. We partnered up with some incredible social justice organizations and youth organizations of color to bring in very experienced trainers and facilitators. We took our time constructing the camp, because we knew some really deep issues would come up by bringing such diverse communities together. Some really historic lines of privilege and racism, suppression and repression surfaced. Fortunately, we had some amazing people with a lot of patience and love to help the white people. It's not easy to deal with the institutional and personal racism that we have as white people in a society that's been constructed for our benefit to the exclusion of other people. It was an incredible learning experience, and in fact I think many people took away more from that camp than from any other Ruckus Camp.

In the ten years that I've been doing this work professionally, I've never felt better than I do right now. I think that the tide is turning. We're beginning to win. Certainly we're still seeing the loss of habitat and ecosystems and the continued suppression of people in marginalized communities around the planet. On a purely materialistic level, everything that we value is fading fast. It would be easy to get demoralized. But instead we're getting organized, and anyone with their ear to the ground can hear the not so distant thunder of our movement.

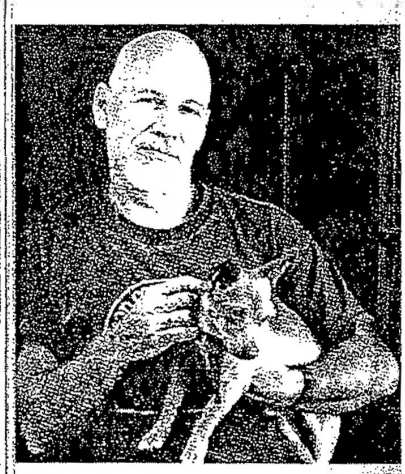
MENTOR

▶ 6.

Changing Culture

Choosing Life over Money

| KEVIN DANAHER |



Kevin Danaher

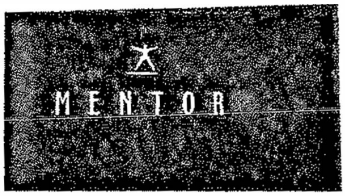
I do a lot of speaking on college campuses and what I say to students is: You are far more sophisticated that we ever were as a movement. The motivation of our movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, was fear. We didn't want to go to a far-off land and kill people or be killed.

The movement of young people today is far different. There is an element of fear, of course, because they see their planet being destroyed; they see the biosphere's basic systems breaking down. So, understandably they are concerned. I try to encourage them in their concern but not in an apocalyptic direction.

The question is: How bad does it have to get before people wake up? How many canaries have to die in the coal mine before even the dumbest miner, even the Rush Limbaugh ditto-heads say: Aw gee, something's going on here; we better get active before it all comes apart. The truth is, people my age (in their 50s) are going to be dead before the doo-doo really hits the fan.

I think it's easy to predict the way things are going to happen. The environmental crisis is going to exhibit undeniable, severe symptoms as the years go by and the social crisis will similarly exacerbate.

Even now, an increasing number of young people are seeing that there's a social crisis — thousands of children are dying from hunger. Children are dying from measles, when a vaccine costs ten



cents. They see the inequality growing. Even the World Bank and other ruling institutions admit that the inequality is growing.

Then, you have an environmental crisis that is threatening things (like the ozone layer) upon which we all depend for our existence. The polar ice caps are melting. The glaciers are in retreat. We have topsoil loss at an unsustainable rate and ground water pollution, all signs of systemic breakdown that can't be ignored.

Those crises are in turn creating a third crisis, which I would label a spiritual crisis. You have millions of people here in the affluent part of the planet who turn their heads. They see the house on fire; they see the child screaming from the upstairs window, and they say: I've got to go to the library and read a book about combustion because I don't know enough about fires. They cop out.

That moral bankruptcy must be addressed. The question is: How do you reach the public mind? How do you reach the public heart and spirit? To say: Look, there's an emergency; there's a crisis and you want to go out to the mall instead of going to vote?

There's a crisis of powerlessness. People are walking around saying: I'm only one person. What can I do? I can't fight city hall. If there's a revolution, then the new leadership will be just as bad as the old. Well, if that were true, then there'd still be slavery. Women wouldn't have the right to vote. We wouldn't have civil rights legislation. We wouldn't have the 40-hour workweek.

People don't realize that workers in China don't have the weekend. We do because we fought and people actually died to get the 40-hour week. In China where Nike, Hewlett-Packard, Levi-Strauss, and other companies make their products to sell us, people don't have the weekend. They don't have the right to form trade

unions; they don't have the right to speak freely or worship as they choose. Yet US companies are happy to go there and make money.

What's great about the youth movement is that youth see this kind of hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy, and they're willing to go out in the street and protest. In fact, the youth movement has succeeded in changing the very nature of the culture. If you look at the way these protests are organized at the WTO meetings in Seattle or in Washington, DC, there are no generals. It's all lieutenants. It's a very flat hierarchy. It's more like a hub and spokes.

Each affinity group is organized in small groups. It's very open, very participatory. Everybody gets the right to speak. It's a real democratic culture. Not democracy like every few years you go into a booth and punch holes in a piece of cardboard. But a truly democratic process where it's participatory and not 'representative.' To me, this is very encouraging.

In my pubic education work, I encourage young people. I say: Go for it. You're on the right track. And I'm totally encouraged by the power, the vitality, and the diversity of this movement and the willingness to be self-critical.

Even before the Seattle protest ended, people were saying: Well, you know, there should have been more people of color here. What did we do wrong in our organizing that it wasn't more diverse? And it was pretty damn diverse. It was more diverse than the people who run this country — the corporations, the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO. And yet the movement was very self-critical.

The key tactic that we have, that the élite will never have, is mass mobilizing. We can mass mobilize the citizenry. They, by their very definition as an élite ruling class, do not do that and will not do that. They are more into mass demobilizing. They want people to go

to the Super Bowl or World Series or to watch TV. They don't want people to go out en masse into the streets to protest for change.

If we can perfect the art and science of how to democratically mass mobilize, we can force just about any policy change. You name a policy — transportation, housing, energy, food — you give me 10,000 people in the streets and we'll change that policy, because they can't ignore thousands of people in the street. They can tear gas us, trash us in the press, but that shows their weakness, not their strength. If they were really strong, they would debate us in public arenas and win the debate in the public mind. They know they can't, so they shun debate.

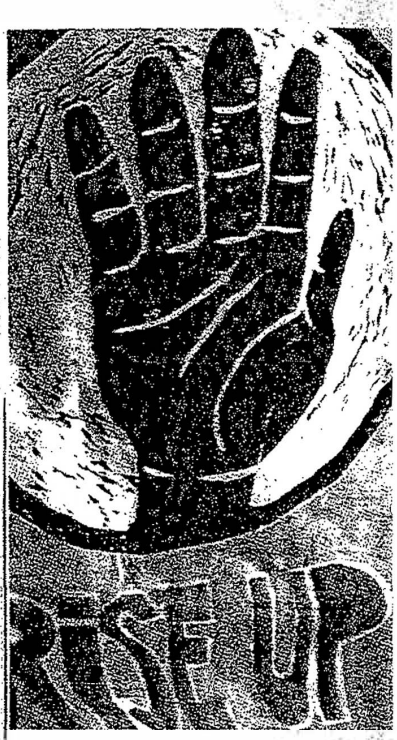
At Global Exchange, we're focused on the central issue of corporate power. The corporations have not only taken over the economy, our food, our transportation, energy, things of that sort; they've also taken over our government. The youth movement sees this, knows it's wrong, and has developed a critique of corporate power. They're willing to go out and confront corporate power in all of its manifestations.

FORREST ANDERSON-HAWES

Seattle WTO protest

More and more youth are grasping that there are two basic worldviews out there: the money cycle and the life cycle. Under the money value system, a 2,000-year-old redwood is not a gift of the creator; it's $300,000 worth of lumber. That ideology will destroy nature.

I think the movement is at a critical point now. All of the different pieces of the movement — like the anti-sweatshop



Art & Revolution banner

movement, save the trees, biotechnology — are starting to realize: Look, we're each fingers and we've got to come together as a fist. Their starting question is how to build unity within the movement. And as long as people keep asking that question, we will develop an organizational response.

One of the tricky skills to develop is to take the anger and the pain and transform it into positive energy. In those dark moments of the soul, you have to say: Do I really have a right to wallow in self-despair because maybe we won't succeed? Or do you have an obligation to little kids dying in Africa or somewhere else, and have to say: Come on, let's get back in the ring. You've had your few moments of wallowing; now let's go out and kick some corporate ass!

The social change movement is not a destination you reach and then relax, but a mode of travel – a way of life. I'm thankful every morning when I wake up that I know what my life is about. And it came out of a negative experience of seeing suffering and injustice that we in this country can only imagine the depths of. There's a way to make that experience positive, and it has me fired up to be self-directed toward a goal where all of our children can enjoy a decent school and all of our children have enough to eat. That's part of what this struggle is all about. It's redefining that personal pronoun 'our,' as in the expression 'children on the face of the Earth are our children.' We must get people to feel that, really deeply, and act on it. If we can do that, we can change every problem that's out there.

Kevin Danaher is the cofounder of Global Exchange in San Francisco and has written and edited many books dealing with US foreign policy, including Globalize This!The Battle against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule.

CONTEXT

10.

Organizing a New Generation of Activists

The Nuts and Bolts of Working Together

| UNANIMOUS CONSENSUS |

AFFINITY GROUPS (AG)

Affinity groups rose out of the anarchist and workers movement of the late 19th century, during their struggle against fascism in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. In the US, the strategy came back to life in April of 1977, when 2,500 people organized into affinity groups and occupied the Seabrook, New Hampshire nuclear power plant. Since then, it has been used in many successful actions throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, including the Central American solidarity movement, lesbian/gay liberation movement, Earth First!, the Earth liberation movement, and many others.

Affinity groups are self-sufficient, autonomous teams of 5 to

Lockdown – WTO protest, Seattle

20 people who share certain principles, goals, interests, and/or plans that enable them to work together well. Through a decentralized, highly democratic, and powerful process, affinity groups develop and carry out actions alone or collectively as part of a mass action. When acting with other affinity groups, one spokesperson is chosen to represent the group at a spokescouncil meeting.

Affinity groups are vital to any mass nonviolent action for providing support and solidarity to their members. When an affinity group works and acts together, familiarity and trust develop, and feelings of isolation or alienation from the movement or the world in general can be alleviated. By generating familiarity, the affinity group structure also reduces the possibility of infiltration by outside provocateurs.

Affinity groups for mass actions are often formed during nonviolence training sessions. Some affinity groups may only be together for one action, but many stay together and work on other actions, becoming a source of ongoing support. Affinity groups generally operate on a consensus decision-making model.

ROLES WITHIN THE AFFINITY GROUP

Roles should be rotated to share skills, information, and influence.

- **Medical:** You may want to have a trained street medic to deal with any medical or health issues during an action.
- **Legal Observer:** If legal observers are not already in place, then people not involved in the action may want to take notes on police conduct and possible violations of activists' rights.
- **Media:** If you are doing an action that plans to draw media attention, empower a member to act as a spokesperson.

- **Action Elf/Vibes-Watcher:** An Action Elf helps out with the general wellness of the group, supplying water, massages, and encouragement (song or cheers). This role is not essential but may be particularly helpful in daylong actions in which people might become tired or irritable.
- **Traffic:** If your group is on the move, you may need to designate some members to control traffic (stop cars at intersections) and generally watch out for the safety of people on the streets.
- **Arrest-able Members:** Depending on what kind of direct action you are doing, you may require a certain number of members who are willing to be arrested. Or some parts of an action may need a minimum number of arrest-ables. Either way, it is important to know who is doing the action and plans on getting arrested.
- **Jail Support:** Only required when members have been arrested. The person who fills this role has all the arrestees' contact information and will go to the jail, talk to and work with lawyers, keep track of who got arrested, etc.
- **General Support:** Support roles (people not involved in civil disobedience) are critical to any mass action. Support members provide physical and moral support; know the people in the group by name and description (including special medical information); arrange care of arrestees' cars, personal belongings, etc.; provide transportation to the action; and supply food and water. Support people have additional responsibilities during and after an arrest, as well.

Support Clusters

A cluster is made up of affinity groups that come together to work on a certain task or part of a larger action. Thus, a cluster might be responsible for blockading an area, locking down together, organizing one day of a multi-day action, or putting together and performing a mass street theater performance. Clusters can be organized around a geographical area, an issue or identity (student cluster or anti-sweatshop cluster, for example) or an action interest (street theater or lockdown, for example).

Spokescouncil

A spokescouncil is the larger organizing structure used in the affinity group model to coordinate a mass action. Each affinity group (or cluster) empowers a 'spoke' (representative) to go to a spokes-council meeting to decide on important issues for the action. For instance, affinity groups need to decide on a legal/jail strategy, possible tactical issues, meeting places, and many other logistics.

A spokescouncil does not take away an individual affinity group's autonomy; affinity groups make their own decisions about what they want to do on the streets (as long as it fits in with any action guidelines). All decisions in spokescouncils are made by consensus, so all affinity groups have agreed to and are committed to the mass direct action.

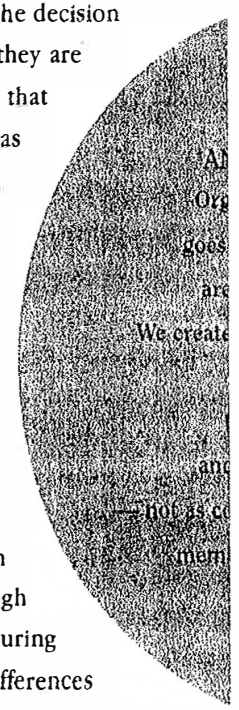
CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Consensus is a process for group decision making. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision that is acceptable to all. Through consensus, people not only work to achieve better solutions, they also work to promote trust and the growth of community.

With consensus, people can and should work through differences to reach a mutually satisfactory position. It is possible for one person's insights or strongly held beliefs to sway the whole group. No ideas are lost; each member's input is valued as part of the solution.

A group committed to consensus may utilize other forms of decision-making (individual, compromise, and majority rules) when appropriate. However, a group that has adopted a consensus model will use that process for any item that brings up a lot of emotions and that concerns people's ethics, politics, and morals.

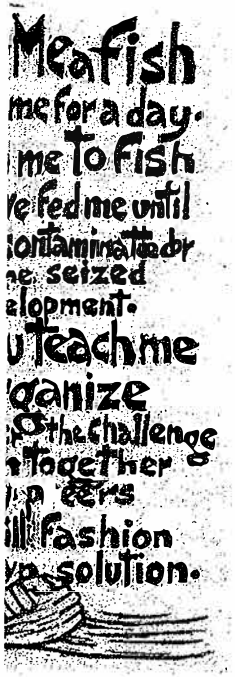
Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks the decision made is necessarily the best one possible, or even that they are sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her/his position on the matter was misunderstood or not given a proper hearing. Optimally, everyone will think it is the best decision. (This often happens because, when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than individuals).



For consensus to be a positive experience, it is best if the group has common values, some skill in group process and conflict resolution, commitment and responsibility to the group by its members, and sufficient time for everyone to participate in the process.

In a consensus process, a proposal for resolution is put forward. It is amended and modified through discussion or withdrawn if it seems to be a dead end. During the discussion period, it is important to articulate differences clearly. It is the responsibility of those who are having trouble with a proposal to put forth alternative suggestions. The fundamental right

of consensus is that all people are able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will. The fundamental responsibility of consensus is to assure others of their right to speak and be heard. Thus, coercion and trade-offs are replaced with creative alternatives, and compromise is replaced with synthesis.



RICARDO LEVINS MORALES, NORTHLAND POSTER COLLECTIVE

When a proposal seems to be well understood by everyone and no new changes are asked for, the facilitator(s) will ask if there are any objections or reservations to it. If there are no objections, there can be a call for consensus. If there are still no objections, then after a moment of silence you have your decision. Once consensus appears to have been reached, it really helps to have someone repeat the decision to the group, so that everyone is clear on what has been decided.

If you cannot support a decision that has been reached or is on the verge of being reached, there are several ways for you to express your objections.

- **Non-Support:** "I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along."
- **Reservations:** "I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it."
- **Standing Aside:** "I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it."
- **Blocking:** "I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. It is immoral." If a final decision violates someone's fundamental moral values, they are obligated to block consensus.

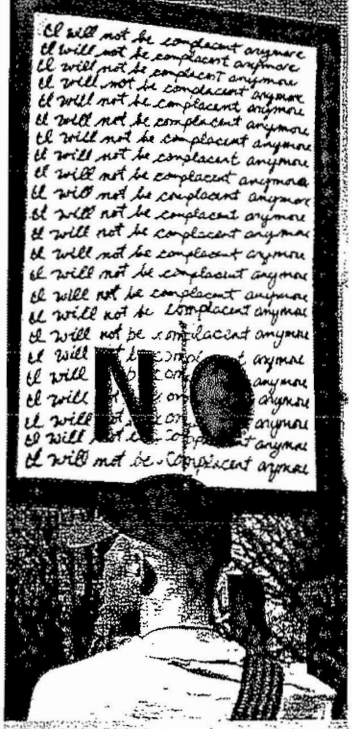
- **Withdrawing from the Group:** If many people express non-support or reservations, or if they stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. This is what is known as a 'lukewarm consensus,' and it is just as desirable as a lukewarm beer or a lukewarm bath.

If consensus is blocked and no new consensus can be reached, then the group stays with whatever the previous decision was on the subject or does nothing, if that is applicable.

There are several roles that, if filled, can help consensus decision making run smoothly.

- ✓ **Facilitator(s):** Facilitators aid the group in defining decisions that need to be made, help them through the stages of reaching an agreement, keep the meeting moving, focus discussion to the point at hand; make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate, and formulate and test to see if consensus has been reached. Facilitators help to direct the process of the meeting, not its content. They never make decisions for the group. If a facilitator feels too emotionally involved in an issue or discussion and cannot remain neutral in behavior (if not in attitude), then s/he should ask someone to take over the task of facilitation for that agenda item.
- ✓ **Vibes-Watcher:** Someone besides the facilitator, a vibes-watcher watches and comments on individual and group feelings and patterns of participation. Vibes-watchers need to be especially attuned to the sexism in group dynamics.

CONTEXT



NEVA WELTON

- ✓ **Recorder and Timekeeper:** Recorders take notes on the meeting, especially of decisions made and their means of implementation. Timekeepers keep things on schedule, so that each agenda item can be covered in the time allotted for it. (If discussion runs overtime, the group may or may not decide to contract for more time to finish up.)

Even though individuals take on these roles, all participants in a meeting should be aware of and involved in the issues, process, and feelings of the group, and should share their individual expertise in helping the group to run smoothly and reach a decision. This is especially true when it comes to finding compromise agreements to seemingly contradictory positions.

LINKS

www.directdemocracynow.org
www.actupny.org

community

7 Great Ideas for Movement Builders

by Grace Lee Boggs

As a Black Power activist in the 1960s, I identified more with Malcolm than with Martin.

However, my studies of King's struggles with the urban crisis during the three years from the Watts uprising until his assassination in April 1968 have taught me a lot about the difference between radical organizing and movement leadership.

Radical organizers concentrate on mobilizing masses to protest against the system. Their main aim is increasing militancy and numbers. On the other hand, movement leaders recognize the almost pathological fear and despair that oppression creates and therefore the need for the oppressed to find creative ways to move beyond fear to hope, and beyond despair to transformation.

In recent months I have been exchanging ideas and experiences with John Maguire, a friend of King's since their student days and a 1961 Freedom Rider. Together with Vincent Harding, John prepared the initial draft of King's 1967 anti-Vietnam war speech. I have known Vincent since the 1960s, but I met John for the first time last October. Recently, John sent me the following Notes on Movement Building, inspired by our correspondence. I recommend their careful study and discussion by activists who are beginning to sense that something is blowing in the wind:

- Suffering and oppression are not enough to create a movement. A movement begins when the oppressed begin seeing themselves not just as victims, but as new men and women, pioneers in creating new, more human relations, thus advancing the evolution of the human race.
- Movement builders are able to recognize the humanity in others, including their opponents, and therefore the potential within them for redemption and the possibility of work-through-change.
- Movement builders are conscious of the need to go beyond slogans and to create programs of struggle that transform and empower participants.
- At the heart of movement building is the concept of two-sided transformation, both of ourselves and of our institutions.
- Thinking dialectically is pivotal to movement building because it prepares us for the contradictions that inevitably develop in the course of the struggle. A struggle that starts with the need of a particular racial, ethnic, or social group only becomes a movement if it creates hope and the vision of a new society for everyone. But because great hopes can also lead to great disappointments, movement participants must be in touch with elements that sustain them through dark times as well as bright.
- Movement building is intergenerational and involves children and youth, as well as adults, in community building and productive activities.
- Movement building is essentially countercultural. It is a struggle to transform both ourselves (the way we think and act in relationship to one another and the Earth) and institutions. Radical organizing, by contrast, is mostly about distributive justice, making demands on the system in order to redistribute the products of the society (wages, healthcare, education, etc.) more equitably. Genuine movement building is about restorative justice, new ways of thinking and being that restore community and advance us another step in our evolution as human beings.

For information on Maguire's Notes on Movement Building, see www.belovedcommunitynet.org. Grace Boggs has been an activist for more than 60 years and is the author of the autobiography *Living for Change.* She will celebrate her 90th birthday in June. This article appeared in the *Michigan Citizen,* February 20-26, 2005.