

**how
to
practice
nonviolence**



This folder has proved its effectiveness in action. Earlier editions of it have been used by Negro students in their now-famous and repeatedly successful "sit-ins" to end racial barriers in lunch counters in dozens of Southern cities. These "sit-ins" were won by the use of **nonviolence**, the technique by which Mahatma Gandhi won India's independence. What is nonviolence? Most people don't get violent unless they are provoked to anger, or as self-defense against violence done to them. It is possible, however, to act in such situations by other means—refraining from violence **on purpose**. That is what we mean by nonviolence. For some people, nonviolence is a moral duty based on religious faith. For many others it is a practical method of action used because it gets results. The purpose of this guide is not to explain why nonviolence is good, but to state the basic steps you can follow to make it work.

THE PROBLEM AT HAND

Nonviolence is a way of overcoming injustice, not of retaliating for it. Basically it is rooted in the recognition that your opponent is human. Being human, he will probably react with fear if you threaten him, but in the long run he is likely to respond with good will if you go out of your way to encourage it. Don't expect immediate results. Your opponent's first reaction may be surprise that you have not answered injustice with injustice. He may then become exasperated that you are not "talking his language," and he may try to provoke you further, try to incite you to violence.

He will probably be very suspicious and think that you are planning to trick him in some secret way, or he may think that your nonviolence stems from weakness, and try to take advantage of you.

But gradually, if you hold fast to your nonviolent program, your opponent will gain respect for you. If your campaign succeeds, it will not be by defeating him but by removing his hostility. You will not only have attained your objective but will have given it a firm foundation in good will to make it permanent. In the following, it is assumed that the campaign is conducted by a group rather than an individual.

FOUR BASIC GROUND RULES

1. Define your objective. There is much injustice around you. A single nonviolent campaign will not remove it all. Focus sharply on the immediate injustice: it must be fairly simple and easy to discuss in clear-cut terms. Other matters may be drawn into the struggle later, and other major objectives will call for a major campaign later on.

2. Be honest. Part of your goal is to win your opponent's respect. Conduct yourself in a way to encourage it; let him know by your own scrupulous care for truth and justice that you merit his respect. This may mean giving more than you get, but you will find that it is worth it in the long run. Remember, too, that you are not without guilt yourself. You may benefit greatly by examining your present and past conduct.

3. Love your enemy. This sounds like a paradox, but it works. You are not up against a deep-dyed villain but only a man who has done wrong. Even though you are striving to undo that wrong,

show good will to him no matter what he does. Do not vilify, ridicule or humiliate him at any time, in any way. Let him know at all times that you are out to establish justice, not to defeat him.

4. Give your opponent a way out. By using nonviolence, you are showing a kind of strength that shows up the weakness of injustice. Don't lord it over your opponent. Recognize his weakness and his embarrassment. Find a way to let him participate in your victory when it comes.

FIVE STRATEGIC STEPS

1. Investigate. Get the facts. Clear up any possible misunderstandings right at the start. If you are sure that an injustice has been done, be equally sure who is to blame for it. A nonviolent campaign based on false or shaky assumptions is licked before it starts.

2. Negotiate. Go to your opponent and put the case to him. Maybe a solution can be worked out at this point. Maybe your opponent has a grievance that you didn't know about. Now is the time to find out. If no solution is possible, let your opponent know that you intend to stand firm to restore justice, and let him know that you are always ready to negotiate further.

3. Educate. Keep your group well-informed of the issues, and spread the word to the public. This may involve issuing mimeographed handbills, printed leaflets or a number of pamphlets. It may also call for door-to-door personal visits, telephone calls, public speeches, press releases. Talk to the editor of the local newspaper and explain

your position. Organize a letters-to-the-editor campaign and a similar campaign of letters to government officials. Always stick to the facts, avoid exaggeration, be brief and show good will.

4. Demonstrate. Picketing, poster-walking, mass meetings and the handing out of leaflets on the street are called for at this stage. All of these must be conducted in an orderly manner. The people who are demonstrating should be neat, well-informed and calm, able to endure possible heckling and to withstand possible violence without panic, and without resorting to violence in return. It is most important to maintain discipline at this stage and "keep cool under fire."

5. Resist. Nonviolent resistance is the final step, to be added to the other four as a last resort. This means a boycott, a strike, the defiance of an unjust law, or other forms of civil disobedience. Discipline must be firm to avoid making your resistance violent; every provocation must be answered with continuing good will, and you must be ready for self-sacrifice that will leave no doubt as to your integrity and courage. But remember that suffering is to be endured, never inflicted—in this is the moral victory from which your struggle can be won.

EIGHT RULES FOR PERSONAL CONDUCT

1. Be creative. Nonviolence does not mean being aloof or failing to act. You must act creatively in the situation.

2. Be firm. Once you have taken a position,

hold to it tenaciously until victory. This means weighing your own capacity for endurance and measuring carefully the task you set yourself.

3. Be humble. Avoid swagger as much as you avoid knuckling under. Be prepared to concede or to gloss over secondary issues, no matter how provocative, which have no bearing on the immediate conflict.

4. Be forthright. Deal fairly and honestly with your opponent at all times, no matter what he does. Speak honestly and to the point.

5. Be calm. It is a rare person who does not get angry and afraid under stress. Don't think you are being weak if you have fears, but try to overcome them by remembering your goal, and do not show either your fear or your anger.

6. Be helpful. Others who are involved in the struggle may need your material or spiritual aid. Everyone in the campaign should be on the lookout for the needs of others, and you should first take care of those who suffer most.

7. Be forgiving. Give up your resentment over the wrong you are striving to set right. Forgive your opponent; be big enough to root out the evil he has done without bearing a grudge against him personally.

8. Be friendly. Without swerving from your objective, try to see the situation from your opponent's viewpoint. Do whatever you can to develop what is good in him; let him know that you bear him no malice and that you welcome from him the same good will you consistently show him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

It is not possible, in a small folder like this, to go into every detail or to answer every question relating to your specific problem. To be effective in your campaign, you will want to learn more about nonviolence; the following publications are recommended:

THE POWER OF NONVIOLENCE by Richard B. Gregg. The classic work, by a man who worked with Mahatma Gandhi in his famous and successful nonviolent campaign to free India from foreign rule. 253 pp., \$2.

PERSPECTIVE ON NONVIOLENCE. A short illustrated guidebook to theory and practice. 33 pp., 25¢.

Also worth reading:

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE by Henry David Thoreau. Available in a number of editions, this essay is included in the Modern Library edition of Thoreau's selected works.

COERCION WITHOUT VIOLENCE by Clarence Marsh Case. Out of print, but worth reading.

ERASING THE COLOR LINE by George M. Houser. Out of print, but tells of successful non-violent desegregation campaigns.

NONVIOLENCE IN AN AGGRESSIVE WORLD by A. J. Muste. Out of print, but worth reading.

WAR WITHOUT VIOLENCE by Krishnalal Shridharani. Out of print, but worth a trip to the library.



The Fellowship of Reconciliation

This folder and the information therein are a part of a many-sided program designed to create an awareness of the need—and the possibility—for nonviolent solutions to vital problems in a strife-ridden world.

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Since 1914 in Great Britain and 1915 in the United States, the FOR has striven to end war and to mitigate its consequences, in the belief that love and compassion, as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus, provide the only genuine basis for healthy human relationships.

More than an anti-war group, the FOR works to find nonviolent solutions to race conflicts, industrial disputes and other situations in which fear and hatred tend to set human beings at odds with one another and set the scene for violence.

For information about membership and activities to promote peace through love, write:

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