

Nonviolence: The Humiliation-free Strategy of Using Power in Political Conflict

Proposal for making it to be professional field of training and practice

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This is a call for forming a Nonviolence Action-Group/Project in Human DHS with the purpose of developing our own skills in Nonviolent Direct Action and facilitating formation of a **Global Association of Nonviolence Training Practitioners**. I believe Nonviolence as a strategy in conflict is singularly suitable for the HDHS ethos of coping with conflict in contemporary world while affirming global dignity, including of course that of anyone's adversaries.

The suggested Action Group would discuss and decide in issues involved in Nonviolent Direct Action, including specific strategies, professional standards for trainers, training materials and processes.

My own contribution will begin with the following:

Areas of Application and Definition

Nonviolence, the strategy of "waging good conflict", can be applied in all conflict situations in which communication with the adversary can be established. It should be the preferred strategy in any culture, as Science has become the globally preferred approach to coping with physical and technical problems by people of any culture, and as Medicine goes "sans frontières" for helping all living humans.

Nonviolence should not be confused with any other behavior that does not involve or that rejects violence, such as avoiding conflict, compliance, indifference, surrender; or with such worthy behaviors as Civil Disobedience, mediating, peacemaking or pacifism. Nonviolence--so often mistaken for weakness in face of violation of human rights--should be known as a powerful and effective strategy in conflict, an alternative to both inaction and violence.

Nonviolence as a field refers to behavior in conflict and is a strategy for using one's Power. It demands making a conscious decision to regard the opponents as human beings, same as we, and actively confront them with moral Power without causing them physical or psychological damage (humiliation).

The Nonviolence Pledge

The consultant/trainer in the art/skills of Nonviolence will enter the professional relationship with any client after the client, every individual who wishes to take part in the training, signed a contract in which they had agreed to abide by certain limitations and ethical restrictions regarding themselves and their opponents. The same points could be included in the Nonviolence Hippocratic Oath, the members of the proposed International Association of Nonviolence Training Practitioners, and their potential clients, would take and sign. I suggest including the following points:

- I realize and accept the fact that my adversary is a worthy human being as myself, endowed with a soul/human potential of unlimited value, free will, conscience, and reason; potentially capable of responding to moral and reasonable demand.
- I agree not to harm my adversaries psychologically or physically. I consciously renounce vengeance or punishment of my opponents, seeking to win them over rather than “win.” My goal is to make the opponents change some of their specific behavior that is unjust/harmful, not to destroy them.
- I agree to avoid any violence in confronting my adversaries physically or verbally. I agree to refrain from any form of abusive, derisive, or ridiculing language in my contact with the adversaries, but rather seek to use such language as will help them reform their unjust behavior by affirming their dignity, moral standing, good will and humanity. To that end I agree to refrain from judgmental language, limiting my moral condemnation to their wrong doing, never applying it to what they *are*.
- I agree to regard my nonviolent campaign as a conscious, responsible and planned process. I agree not to enter into any action without (1) having a fairly strong feeling I shall succeed in attaining my objective; (2) having clear knowledge of what exactly I want my opponent to do (to change) as the result of my applying of Nonviolent Power; (3) defining how shall I know whether I have achieved my practical goal; (4) knowing what are the safeguards against having my action become a demonstration of weakness; and (5) prior to launching the Nonviolent campaign, informing my adversaries exactly what they need to do/change and why, in order to avoid facing my Nonviolent Direct Action against them.

Civil Disobedience

Passive resistance or Civil Disobedience requires no special skills. Non-cooperation can be effective when practiced by many people, (like Gandhi's Satyagraha movement in India). In societies the members of which are on the giving rather than the receiving end of the club of oppression, like mine (Israel), Civil Disobedience is not likely to attract masses. Henry David Thoreau, the prophet of Civil Disobedience,

wrote in such situation that *"There are nine hundred and ninety-nine patrons of virtue to one virtuous man."*

The following points of decision, through which the trainers would guide their clients, apply to all forms of Nonviolent action: Civil Disobedience, including its extreme life-threatening form of hunger strike, and Nonviolent Confrontation:

- What are the practical goals of the planned action and how, at the designated point in time, we will know whether we reached them or not?
- Who are the people whose support we should mobilize and who are those whose resistance we should attempt to neutralize (Force Field Analysis).
- Who and how will take care of the media and PR (The Soviet nuclear-scientist-turned-dissident Andrei Sakharov wrote, *"spotlights are our only weapon"*).
- What would be the message presented to the opponents before and throughout the action? -- That stage of preparation will include making sure, that the message reaches the opponent and that it includes an offer to negotiate before Nonviolent resistance or Civil Disobedience would be necessary. The message needs to be checked for practicality, moral power, justice in affirmation the rights and dignity of the opponent, and language of Nonviolence.
- What are the physical-practical dimensions of our civil Disobedience, Resistance, Sit-in, Demonstrative action, Strike, etc. How and where, by who and when it would be started, conducted, and terminated?

Skills of Nonviolent Confrontation

Leaders of the greatest nonviolent campaigns, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, never had more than a handful of activists skilled in nonviolent communication. (Remember the scene from the movie "Gandhi" in which the activists marched in formations of four to the gates of a plant in dead silence? The police were blocking the gates. It became a bloody ritual of organized but restrained police violence, and on the other side of calculated martyrdom. That is what Nonviolent Confrontation should *not* be. From the point of view of the police, it must have been terribly threatening/humiliating: people approaching them physically without even making an attempt to approach them humanly.)

Nonviolence must include human communication as its first, most important, and best means of exercising power.

I believe that acquiring the skills of nonviolent communication is the greatest contribution to individuals and to political culture that Nonviolence Training as a profession could raise. People possessing those skills, in any culture, would simply be much more empowered even in their personal conflict situations, having very effective options open for them, whereas now they have open but the different venues of fight and flight. **The hard substance of Nonviolence Training should be acquiring the skills of Nonviolent Confrontation\ Communication.**

Personal and Interpersonal Skills of Nonviolent Confrontation include:

- **Team Building:** Nonviolent activists could become the potential victims if violence breaks out; they need to compensate for their physically deficient power by being teamed up: *never alone, never lonely in a crowd*, but committed to their team members and feeling their power and caring);
- Nonviolent use of restraining physical force,
- Skills of coping with physical attack,
- Communication skills required in establishing helping relationship with persons who not only think they are right and you are the villain, but often are full of aggression and hate facing you (the best psychological minds, I believe, should put themselves into the task of devising techniques that could be learned and practiced in Nonviolent confrontation).
- Practical skills in providing the activists with the best survival equipment for Nonviolent Confrontation (drinking water etc.),
- Practical skills in providing the activist with the best communication tools with the goal of demonstrating the greatest possible moral power by which to pierce the armor of violence and touch the adversary's humanity and conscience.

That is the formidable task that I believe could be greatly advanced if and when the Human DHS community shares in shouldering it. I do have my written contribution ready, based on my experience in confronting the violent war-oriented fanatics of conflict in my country. I wish very much to share it with whoever would be interested in the subject.

In affinity, Olek Netzer