Nonviolence –Some Short Quotations

"Violence as a tool of conflict could be abandoned in the same way that bows and arrows were because we have replaced them with weapons that are more effective. With human innovation, we can make nonviolent struggle more powerful than the newest and latest technologies of war. The greatest hope for humanity lies not in condemning violence but in making violence obsolete." — [Jamila Raqib](https://default.salsalabs.org/Td87d98c8-312a-4f9b-936b-d472a57ff3d5/73f213d0-9291-4d36-89ed-21024f132530)

"For people serious about seeking change, there are realistic alternatives [to violent tactics]. Imagine what our world would look like now if we allowed ourselves to develop some faith in them." — [Erica Chenoweth](https://default.salsalabs.org/T36b9e7d2-a8df-44fc-be56-115ba2723fb1/73f213d0-9291-4d36-89ed-21024f132530)

"People who study nonviolence know that chances of success are greatly increased when participants have knowledge of the wide range of [nonviolent tactics](https://default.salsalabs.org/Tf002ce26-5f9d-4525-97f7-76d270dc7102/73f213d0-9291-4d36-89ed-21024f132530) and how to strategically escalate." — David Hart

“Our imaginations have been dulled into believing the inevitability of violence. We have come to think that only violence will either make us safe or prevent the bad guys from harming us and those we love. This is a lie. It is a lie in the first place because violence does not end violence; it only creates endless cycles of violence.” — Emmanuel Katongole

Nonviolence is more sensible than revenge: “How can justice be attained when, in the expiation of an old wrong, another wrong is to be committed? No reasonable creature would conceive of the idea of obliterating ink stains with ink, or spots of oil with oil. (How can) blood be washed out with blood?” — Bertha von Suttner

Gene Sharp urges strategic, vigorous nonviolence: “Nonviolent action is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of ‘battle,’ requires wise strategy and tactics and demands of its ‘soldiers’ courage, discipline and sacrifice. This view of nonviolent action as a technique of active combat is diametrically opposed to the popular assumption that, at its strongest, nonviolent action relies on rational persuasion of the opponent, and more commonly it consists simply of passive submission."

—Gene Sharp

Nonviolence is a powerful force: “Satyagraha is truth-force, love-force, soul-force—words describing a process of spiritual transformation which goes far beyond the usual meanings attached to 'nonviolence.' It is rooted in the belief that truth/love/soul-force is the most powerful force in existence, a spiritual reality as unexplored today as the power of the atom was a century ago." — James W. Douglass, Lightning East to West

So many problems exist – and so many systems are broken – that it’s easy for people to feel hopeless, powerless and cynical.  But that prevents us from taking positive actions to solve the problems.  Among the signs I hold at our weekly peace vigils, one affirms, “We can solve the problems.,” and another invites people to “Choose a bold, humane future.” Many years ago the Quaker economist and peace activist Kenneth Boulding observed, **“Anything that exists is possible.”**  We can emulate and build upon the good things that already exist – and push further to envision and build a world of peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. – Glen Anderson

"I am calling for the mother of all uprisings to begin. Many remarkable individuals have called for different kinds of revolution: economic, technological, energy, educational, spiritual, ethical, inner: a revolution of the conscience and of the heart. . . . All are motivated by the need to create a better world. But for me, the Revolution of Compassion is the heart, the bedrock, the original inspiration for all others." — Tenzin Gyatso, The XIV Dalai Lama

A friend sent an e-mail saying that the gist of some ancient prophets “claims that ultimately the love and pathos of God will prevail if and when the people can manage a change of heart from self-centeredness to an ethic and behavior that serves the common good, and especially rights the grievous wrongs against the poor and marginalized.” That seems like good advice for our current situation. - Glen Anderson

"Three factors in why some of us respond violently and some of us compassionately in similar situations:

• The language we have been educated to use.

• How we have been taught to think and communicate.

• Specific strategies we learned to influence ourselves and others."

— Marshall Rosenberg

Police and the criminal justice system should NOT be a major way to deal with social problems. We need to invest in positive NONVIOLENT alternatives at the local community level. We can increase public safety and save tax dollars – along with saving lives and reducing cruelty. This article is not radical; it is just smart and sensible: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/07/29/488305/reinvest-communities-reducing-scope-policing/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=amprog_en&utm_campaign=default&utm_content=eml+nwl+01+20210416+inprogress+inp+1+x>

Martin Luther King’s famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” deserves to be read and re-read every now and then.  When some nice Christian ministers expressed concern that King did things that landed him in jail, he re-directed their attention to the underlying problems of severe racial injustice that he had confronted nonviolently.  His “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” is so good that I re-read it every few years. This short quotation provides the flavor:  “You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham.  But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations.  I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes.  It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.  In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action.”

"The discipline of nonviolence requires of us that we move into the various forms of noncooperation. We will probably move slowly, one step at a time. Each step will lead to another step; each step will be a withdrawal from support of what is wrong and at the same time a building of an alternative." — Shelley Douglass

John Lewis, the great nonviolent activist and leader within the Civil Rights Movement, said or wrote this:

“Not one of us can rest, be happy, be at home, be at peace with ourselves, until we end hatred and division.”

Glen Anderson shares these insights about nonviolent organizing: Martin Luther King, Jr., worked boldly and nonviolently in a contentious society, but he worked in ways that promoted solutions instead of merely protesting against cruelty. Contentiousness that fails to practice honest understanding and real compassion is actually a form of violence.  MLK wrote:

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.  …  Returning violence for violence multiples violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.  Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.  Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

This insight is fully consistent with the point that I make in the workshops I conduct to help people organize nonviolent grassroots movements for social and political change.  I explain that conflict has always existed, and conflict always will exist.  What nonviolence does is **change the dynamics** of the conflict – **rewrite the script** about how the conflict will play out.  **Nonviolence is courageous and proactive and powerful**.

Don’t let anyone mislead you into thinking that Martin Luther King was a wimp, or that he was soft on racism.  He was very boldly courageous in fighting racism with the only strategy that can succeed:  strategic nonviolence.

"Terror often happens when a population tries to suppress conflicts instead of supporting their expression. A technique for reducing terror, therefore, is to spread a pro-conflict attitude and the nonviolent skills that support people waging conflict to give full voice to their grievances." — George Lakey

Walter Wink wrote this about the power of nonviolent revolutions: "In 1989, thirteen nations comprising 1,695,000,000 people experienced nonviolent revolutions that succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations. . . . If we add all the countries touched by major nonviolent actions in our century (the Philippines, South Africa . . . the independence movement in India . . .), the figure reaches 3,337,400,000, a staggering 65% of humanity! All this in the teeth of the assertion, endlessly repeated, that nonviolence doesn't work in the 'real' world."

Glen Anderson wrote this: The old saying, “Power corrupts” has more layers of truth in it. Certainly power corrupts the people who hold power. In addition, those people are corrupted further by their fear of losing power. And beyond that, the people who are victimized by those corrupt power-holders are corrupted if they use violence when reacting to their abusers. The only way for ordinary people to break the cycle of corruption is to break the cycle of violence. We can free ourselves only if we use principled nonviolence and smart strategies to fight back against corrupt power-holders.

Practice nonviolence in local conflicts. Often the system (including the police) fails to protect people. Then civilians have the responsibility to intervene nonviolently. People can be trained to nonviolently intervene when they witness police brutality. It is but one tool in a new approach for real community safety and protection. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/metta/2020/07/when-state-cannot-protect-unarmed-civilian-responsibility/>

During the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, the U.N. Secretary General called for a GLOBAL CEASEFIRE. On March 23, 2020, during the Coronavirus pandemic, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, said this: “The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war. That is why today I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.”

"What Gandhi said was, ‘Let's take this extraordinary idea and organize it.’ It hadn't been organized on a massive scale before. He proved that a moral argument is really enough. In fact, only when people are morally steeped in nonviolence to their own satisfaction—that what they believe is correct, when that's what they'll do until death—that's really the only time nonviolence holds. As a tactic, nonviolence will wear out if you don't really have a moral and spiritual foundation to it." — Joan Baez

We must DE-MILITARIZE our foreign policy! The U.S.’s wars and militarism SET A BAD EXAMPLE by telling our nation that KILLING PEOPLE IS HOW YOU SOLVE PROBLEMS. In order to sharply reduce gun violence within the U.S., we must change to a PEACEFUL FOREIGN POLICY!

Someone asked Nelson Mandela: “Did you despise those jailers who kept you in prison on Robben Island for twenty seven years?” He replied: “Of course I did, for many years. They took the best years of my life. They abused me physically and mentally. Then one day when I was working the quarry, hammering the rocks, I realized that they had already taken everything from me except my mind and my heart. Those they could not take without my permission. I decided not to give them away.”

-- Found in [*The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator*](https://default.salsalabs.org/T874359a7-6629-4b88-a2b6-f0625b39cbfb/73f213d0-9291-4d36-89ed-21024f132530) by Jon C. Jenkins and Maureen R. Jenkins

Some people are too angry to recognize that nonviolence is a workable remedy.

Some people are too impatient to explore that nonviolence is actually effective.

As a result, both kinds of people fail to solve the problems.

-- Glen Anderson

“Our society is so inured to violence that it finds it hard to believe in anything else. And that phrase believe in provides the clue. People trust violence. Violence 'saves.' It is 'redemptive.' But when we make survival the highest goal and death the greatest evil, we hand ourselves over to the gods of the Domination System. We trust violence because we are afraid. And we will not relinquish our fears until we are able to imagine a better alternative.” — [Walter Wink](http://org.salsalabs.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=Yj3S%2FtJS7RKWZG5MBn2%2Fid0aUp5ovM2v)

**An organization promotes this new form of mass protest:** No yelling. No screaming. No fighting. Just thousands of people gathering in big public places, standing in complete silence, baffling the police, and creating a calm curiosity instead of tension and aggression. The organization says nonviolence is the force that will change the world.

“Societies which rely heavily on the use of force are likely to be less efficient, more costly, and more unpleasant than those where trust is maintained by other means.” -- Diego Gambetta in “Can we Trust Trust?”  in *Trust:  Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, which he edited.  Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) page 221.

“Those who love peace must learn to organize as effectively as those who love war.” -- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let’s propose bold strategies for changing our culture. Let’s devise strategies for de-legitimizing violence and for affirmatively normalizing nonviolence and pacifism.

John Paul Lederach wrote this: “How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human community while still living in them? I have come to believe that this is the question that, at every step of the way, peacebuilding, this noble endeavor to break beyond the shackles of violence, must forcibly face. I propose a thesis that I feel may be a start at answering that question:

Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize and build the moral imagination. The kind of imagination to which I refer is mobilized when four disciplines and capacities are held together and practiced by those who find their way to rise above violence. Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in:

a) a web of relationships that includes our enemies;

b) the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity;

c) the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act;

d) and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence.”"

Pope Francis said this to a gathering of children at the Vatican: "This is serious. Some powerful people make their living with the production of arms and sell them to one country for them to use against another country. ... It's the industry of death, the greed that harms us all, the desire to have more mone.y...The economic system orbits around money and not men, women ... So war is waged in order to defend money. This is why some people don't want peace: They make more money from war, although wars make money but lose lives, health, education..." Source:  [Pope Francis made to a gathering of children at The Vatican](http://org.salsalabs.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=2cum28UxcU5hSCbNoDTskTNpi5KsJbkk):

“There’s a saying in India that a palm frond is so strong that ten men could not pull it off the tree, but when a new frond appears the old one drops off by itself. Nonviolence is that new frond. As it becomes better known and its capacities more broadly recognized, the institution of war—which is seemingly so well-entrenched—is bound to loosen its hold.” -- This quotation comes from the article Michael Nagler wrote about Pope Francis’ move to challenge the “just war” theory.

Ten values and aspects of nonviolence. They are powerful.

A Franciscan sister and priest summarized the spirituality of nonviolence in these ten principles:

1.   To learn to recognize and respect “the sacred” (“that of God,” as the Quakers say) in every person, including in ourselves, and in every piece of Creation.  The acts of the nonviolent person help to free this Divine in the opponent from obscurity or captivity.

2.   To accept oneself deeply, “who I am” with all my gifts and richness, with all my limitations, errors, failings and weaknesses, and to realize that I am accepted by God.  To live in the truth of ourselves, without excessive pride, with fewer delusions and false expectations.

3.   To recognize that what I resent, and perhaps even detest, in another, comes from my difficulty in admitting that this same reality lives also in me.  To recognize and renounce my own violence, which becomes evident when I begin to monitor my words, gestures, reactions.

4.   To renounce dualism, the “we-they” mentality (Manichaeism).  This divides us into “good people / bad people” and allows us to demonize the adversary.  It is the root of authoritarian and exclusivist behavior.  It generates racism and makes possible conflicts and wars.

5.   To face fear and to deal with it not mainly with courage but with love.

6.   To understand and accept that the New Creation, the building up of the Beloved Community is always carried forward with others.  It is never a “solo act.”  This requires patience and the ability to pardon.

7.   To see ourselves as a part of the whole creation to which we foster a relationship of love, not of mastery, remembering that the destruction of our planet is a profoundly spiritual problem, not simply a scientific or technological one.  We are one.

8.   To be ready to suffer, perhaps even with joy, if we believe this will help liberate the Divine in others.  This includes the acceptance of our place and moment in history with its trauma, with its ambiguities.

9.   To be capable of celebration, of joy, when the presence of God has been accepted, and when it has not been to help discover and recognize this fact.

10. To slow down, to be patient, planting the seeds of love and forgiveness in our own hearts and in the hearts of those around us.  Slowly we will grow in love, compassion and the capacity to forgive.

This ***Decalogue for a Spirituality of Nonviolence*** was written by Rosemary Lynch, OSF, and Alain Richard, OFM.  It was published in the book ***From Violence to Wholeness***, published by Pace E Bene, [www.paceebene.org](http://www.paceebene.org)