

# TEACHING *peace*

*A Guide for the Classroom & Everyday Life*

*By. Leah C. Wells*

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This book is dedicated to all those  
working for learning with integrity, education with dignity  
and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and especially for

**My students in French II,**

whose lives greatly shaped mine.

## Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

The Need for Peace Education	1
How to Use This Book	4

<b>Chapter 1</b> <i>Personal Peacemaking</i>	7
Crucial Skepticism	7
Figuring Out Violence and Nonviolence	7
Hot and Cold Violence	8
Class Creed	9
Quotes to Explore	10
Concepts to Define	13
Selections from Solutions to Violence	13
For the Classroom	13
Peacemaker Pop Quiz	13
Nonviolence Grid	14
Exploring Interconnectedness	16
Resources	17

<b>Chapter 2</b> <i>What Would Gandhi Do?</i>	19
Modern Implications of Gandhi's Work	19
Quotes to Explore	20
Concepts to Define	22
Selections from Solutions to Violence	22
For the Classroom	22
A Force More Powerful: Gandhi	22
V.O.M.P.: A Method of Conflict Resolution	25
Gandhi's Nine Steps of Peacemaking	27
Nonviolent Power Case Analysis	28
Resources	29

<b>Chapter 3</b> <i>Compassion and Intentional Living</i>	31
Reflections on Poverty and Precarity	31
Quotes to Explore	32
Concepts to Define	35
Selections from Solutions to Violence	35
For the Classroom	35
Intentional Communities Investigation	35
Resources	36

<b>Chapter 4</b> <i>Civil Rights, Past and Present</i>	37
Uncommon Knowledge	37
Quotes to Explore	38
Concepts to Define	42
Selections from Solutions to Violence	42
Resources	42

<b>Chapter 5</b> <i>Local and Global Nonviolent Action</i>	43
Students Taking Action	43
Quotes to Explore	43
Concepts to Define	45
Selections from Solutions to Violence	45
For the Classroom	46
Resources	

<b>Chapter 6</b> <i>Women in the Peacemaking Process</i>	49
Balance and Equity	49
Quotes to Explore	49
Concepts to Define	51
Selections from Solutions to Violence	51
For the Classroom	51

Enculturation of Women's and Men's Roles	51
Self-Protection	51
Resources	52
<b>Chapter 7</b> <i>Education Under Scrutiny</i>	55
The Power of Youth	55
Unschooling Lessons	55
Quotes to Consider	58
Concepts to Define	60
Selections from Solutions to Violence	60
For the Classroom	60
Ideal Schools Project	60
Resources	61
<b>Chapter 8</b> <i>A New, Clear Solution</i>	63
Humans and the Environment	63
Quotes to Consider	63
Concepts to Define	65
Selections from Solutions to Violence	66
For the Classroom	66
Intersection of Animal and Human Rights	66
Resources	68
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	69
<b>Conclusion</b>	75
National Campaign on Peace Education	75
<b>About the Author</b>	77



## INTRODUCTION

*“Teach yourself peace. Pass it on.” – Alice Walker*

*“What’s done to children, they will do to society.” – Karl Menninger*

### **The Need for Peace Education**

Something magical is happening in classrooms across the country. It is an effort to make the study of peace a formal part of school.

Let's back up a bit. Learning in its purest form takes place everywhere, not only within the confines of places called pre-, middle-, junior high and high schools. There may be some real learning taking place in schools. It's entirely likely that some student will remember something from his or her 13 years of formal compulsory education.

Somewhere along the way, though, the real joy of learning disappears and a dark cloud of academic violence sets in. Many students, teachers, administrators, policy-makers and average people are unaware that academic violence even exists – at least in the form I mean. There is a conventional way to explain academic violence – the bad stuff that takes place on school grounds during school hours. Many people are acutely aware of this horrific violence that takes place at school – the bullying, the cliques, the teasing and, in the most egregious cases, the school shootings.

But unraveling the layers of school violence is complex. The aforementioned examples of academic violence fit into two categories: hot and cold violence<sup>1</sup>. The teasing, the glares and the unspoken school rules of behavior which delineate groups are a form of cold violence. They're beneath the surface, so commonplace that most people wouldn't even identify them as violence. But they certainly are – the saying "sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" is one of the biggest lies ever told. Words, looks and unwritten rules are some of the most damaging acts of violence that one can endure.

And sometimes cold violence leads to hot violence. Hot violence is much like it sounds; it elicits a visceral response and is an active dynamic. People actively engage in hot violence – it's the stuff that makes the front page of the newspaper. The school shootings at Columbine High School are a perfect example. After suffering years of teasing and bullying by their peers (cold violence), the two young men shot up their cafeteria and hallways, killing many of their peers and a teacher (hot violence).

These forms of hot and cold violence are forms of academic violence because they take place on campus. But there's still more underlying academic violence than that, more insidious, more sly and more embedded in how we perceive the role of education and how we participate in the institution of school.

The academic violence I'm talking about has to do with actual learning, with the coercive and arbitrary nature of grading, of quantifying learning by quarantining it in walled classrooms and fifty-minute periods, by creating a system where students cheat to get by rather than learn for the merit of understanding new information, where teachers are unsupported by their administrators and are overworked and certainly underpaid, where schools are facing

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<sup>1</sup> Colman McCarthy, founder of the Center for Teaching Peace, coined the phrases 'hot' and 'cold' violence in trying to explain to his students the various shapes and forms that violence takes. See Chapter 1 for more information.



unprecedented budget crises at the hands of state and federal power holders who have mismanaged budgets or who feel like education is the lowest rung of the ladder, giving virtually no priority to educational programs and not batting an eye when looking to cut funding for after-school, special education, arts and sports education.

That is only the tip of the iceberg with respect to academic violence which is undermining our educational system and creating a generation of passive learners who are amped up on unhealthy cheap processed foods from their cafeteria, who drink Jolt for breakfast and have Cheetos and pizza for lunch. It is the academically violent system which feeds these students food that makes them rot from the inside out and then punishes them for not being able to sit still in their chairs for extended periods of time.

I asked my students in class one day how they thought teachers would describe a "successful" classroom, and their responses were predictably bleak. They described a room where all of the students are in their seats, bent over their books and binders, working diligently, politely raising their hands and participating in an overly formal learning environment. This is problematic because that kind of environment is not the only one where learning takes place. It is a problem because it forces students to learn by fear rather than by desire. Sometimes learning is messy, disorganized and non-hierarchical.

Education should not inhibit students and punish them for being age-appropriately antsy. I worry that my students seem primarily concerned with "getting through" school, doing the minimal amount of work possible so that they can go to part-time or full-time jobs to pay for car insurance or their extracurricular activities. I worry that they will not read the chapter in Eric Schlossberg's book, *Fast Food Nation*, that talks about the systematic exploitation of minors in the fast food industry, like making them clock out and then work extra time off the clock so that they are ineligible for overtime pay or for benefits. I worry that they are so tired from working late, already getting deficit sleep and learning how to function as a waking zombie, thinking that this is a normal and healthy way to be. I worry about my little robotic students who are kicking and screaming inside to be let loose and who move from room to room and situation to situation with resignation and monotony.

I worry that they do not know how to dream big – or dream at all. Other teachers criticize me for encouraging students to set high goals for themselves, saying that I'm only setting them up for failure because they'll never be able to achieve those goals. And I can see it both ways. I understand what the teachers mean. They're trapped in a system where they're not allowed to dream big, either, because doing that would mean that they probably couldn't ignore the dysfunction and boredom that inundates the profession of teaching. And so if they can't dream big, their students can't either. I also see the how students crave interactions with integrity, where they are really listened to.

This academically violent system creates a fear of stepping out of line, of being too creative, of making the teacher look stupid or saying something too smart, of conforming to state standards or getting ulcers at age 17 because of the SAT exams.

It is the same academically violent system that says you must get straight A's when you're in the sixth grade so that you can get into the right math and science program in the seventh grade so that you can get a jump start on the eighth grade so that you can get into the right track in the ninth grade – because everyone knows that if you're not in AP math in the ninth grade, you might as well forget getting into a good college and getting a degree and a good job and a happy husband or wife and ever having the chance to live a productive, happy and successful life.

You might as well just forget it!

So what does peace education have to do with academic violence? And what is an interim movement?

Peace education is a movement to humanize education, to integrate meaningful learning experiences, foster communication and personal reflection, self-actualization and realization of talents and gifts and how they can be used to make the world a better place. Peace education treats students as active participants in their learning and challenges them to look at their participation in the world as something connected to their daily learning experience. It promotes an interconnected view of the world and gives students tangible skills in conflict resolution and managing everyday problems they encounter. It also teaches students to look at problems in a radical way – radical in the Greek sense of getting to the root.

Peace education is an interim movement because it is not the end result – there is no finality in peace education. In a sense it is working within the educational system to try to transform it. Formal education is not entirely bad. There are good teachers and benefits to playing along and going through school grade by grade. In Grace Llewellyn's book, the Teenage Liberation Handbook, components of formal education like computer resources, school dances, student council, physical education and drivers' training are all listed as potentially good byproducts of formal education.

But there's quite a bit that needs amending. And peace education seeks to shed gentle light on those elements that need reconfiguring and gives support to those who are brave enough and willing to try.

It is a big responsibility to take on the task of educating for justice and peace. Teachers have an inherently powerful job. We have the privilege of standing at the front of a class and guiding students through lesson plans that we have prepared. Certainly teachers have personal beliefs that they feel strongly about. Some teachers adamantly support military recruitment on campus because they feel that it gives students an opportunity to do something respectable with their lives, opportunities they might not otherwise have had. Other teachers are vehemently against military recruitment on campus. If they have a platform to teach a class on nonviolence and peacemaking, critics could rightly assert that the teachers would be using this platform of a peace class to squash dissent and proselytize. This is a legitimate concern.

Teaching peace is not about having a ready-made soapbox to promote progressive social issues. It's not about pitting lefty progressives against rightist conservatives. And it's certainly not about telling students what they should think. Students get enough of being told what to think in their other classes.

Teaching peace is about helping students to find their voices, to listen to themselves and to each other, to trust themselves and to learn more about themselves.

Teaching peace is a privilege, having the opportunity to facilitate intense discussions, to practice listening skills, to hear people with opposing views and be able to listen with an open heart. Teaching peace is about the process of facilitating a fair and balanced discussion, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. Certainly some of the topics covered in a class on nonviolence will be controversial because they are by and large not reported in the mainstream media, and they challenge the conventional way we look at the world.

Teaching peace is not about bashing the United States for centuries of foreign policy decisions that have created vast disparities between the haves and have-nots in the world. It's not about further delineating the good guys from the bad guys. It's about finding accountability and stability through discussion.

It's about drawing the connections between each other, realizing that we share common space and are interconnected as well as interdependent. There is no blame, only mutual causality.

Teaching peace ultimately is about addressing why our schools, homes, communities and countries are increasingly violent. Why do we live in a world where husbands kill their pregnant wives for insurance money, where parents abuse children, where priests abuse altar boys, where the good guy winning over the bad guy means killing him, where postal workers shoot up their workplaces, where heart disease and cancer wreck families who sit down to dinner eating genetically modified foods and argue throughout the meal from start to finish – or don't sit down together at all.

I have been appalled at the number of my students who do not or cannot have a conversation with their family members. Thich Nhat Hanh, in his book *Peace Is Every Step*, encourages his readers to breathe and smile, writing that many families live dangerously because they do not get along.

Certain techniques are helpful in navigating touchy discussions. For example, I hesitate to say directly in class what I believe out of caution for students who might think that it sounds good and adopt my way of thinking without checking it out with what they believe, without deep reflection and synthesis. Prepackaged ideas that students can swallow without chewing are dangerous coming from any teacher.

If students ask me what I think, I ask them what they think I think. Or I ask them what they think. Adults are always talking at students, and it's about time that we shut up and listened to them for a few minutes.

Teaching peace is not for the faint of heart. It's not for people who are afraid to be challenged. Once you say you want to teach peace or support teaching about nonviolence, you will be challenged. But teaching peace is as much about dealing with those challenges as it is about teaching the content material in class.

This is a book for people who are interested in learning more about not only what peace education is, but where it is, when it is and how it is. It is about hearing perspectives on how it is taught, reading evidence that peace education is working, learning about the struggles and case studies and present-day evidence that nonviolence works and is not mere passivity as it is often mislabeled. This book is an opportunity to learn more about liberation education and to participate in the vision of how American education is an integral part of a global revolution to create balance and harmony between people, nature, technology, religion, economics and many other disciplines.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This curriculum was written as a stand-alone guide to teaching peace that can be infused into existing classroom material, used for workshops or as a compendium to the book compiled by Colman McCarthy at the Center for Teaching Peace entitled “Solutions to Violence” which can be ordered by emailing [Colman1@earthlink.net](mailto:Colman1@earthlink.net).

Each chapter begins with an introductory narrative, a framework that sets the tone for approaching the themes therein. A series of quotes by peacemakers and nonviolent figures, some recognizable and some more obscure, follows the narrative and includes a list of questions that can serve as discussion guides for the classroom, writing assignments or personal thinking.

Please do not feel limited by the questions provided, and feel free to incorporate some of your own.

Following the quotes is a list of relevant readings from the book “Solutions to Violence” which is a good source of primary-text information on peace and nonviolence.

Each chapter has a list of concepts to define which relate to the theme of the chapter. A glossary of terms in the appendix provides the definitions for reference.

Especially helpful for the classroom and for workshops is a set of experiential lesson plans pertaining to the topic of the chapter. They generally require a group of people to participate, gaining the maximum benefit of the exercises.

At the end of each chapter is a list of resources, both literary and internet, where more information on the theme of the chapter can be found. The lists are illustrative, not exhaustive, and again please use your own personal resources as well.

Chapter 1, Personal Peacemaking, starts with the students’ own experiences, defining terms which will be used throughout the semester. This first chapter is the foundation for the rest of the chapters, a building block to understanding the fundamentals of nonviolence.

Chapter 2, What Would Gandhi Do, discusses one of the most notable nonviolent figures throughout history, Gandhi. This chapter explores his life and philosophies as a template for understanding how large-scale nonviolent campaigns function, as well as giving the basics of interpersonal conflict resolution.

Chapter 3, Compassion and Intentional Living, takes a turn inward to the inner peacemaking work, as evidenced by the lives of compassionate people such as Dorothy Day, Albert Schweitzer and the Dalai Lama.

Chapter 4, Civil Rights Past and Present, looks at the history of the civil rights struggle in the United States as seen through the eyes of Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as addresses concepts of resistance and present-day implications of racism and discrimination surfacing in the issues of crime and punishment.

Chapter 5, Global Nonviolent Action, examines the pedagogy and application of nonviolent strategies for social change as well as current examples of campaigns employing these methods.

Chapter 6, Women in the Peacemaking Process, shows the contributions, special needs and talents of women in the peace movement and in the world. Because women, and children, often experience the effects of violence first, their voices and actions often precipitate useful and meaningful solutions.

Chapter 7, Nonviolent Education and Action, focuses on the importance of young people taking control of their education and inspiring a vision of education at its best, serving the needs of all students and being an engaging process of shared learning.

Chapter 8, A New Clear Solution, brings the entirety of the course to a conclusion by addressing the issue of interconnectedness, the idea that nothing and no one exists separately from anything. This chapter spans the impact of living in a nuclear age as well as conscientious eating options.



## Chapter 1: Personal Peacemaking

The course begins by thinking about personal nonviolence: What is closer to ourselves than our bodies and spirits? We explore the most prevalent myths about nonviolence, that its practitioners are doormats, letting people walk all over them, and that the only choice of options when confronted with violence is fight or flight, kill or be killed.

Are there other options? What are they? Is nonviolence merely passivity?

Students are often skeptical about the potential of nonviolence “working”. This is a good thing. If they start buying into what we’re saying in the first day, falling hook-and-sinker into our new ideas, then we have some real rethinking to do about what we’re teaching. The essence of learning about peacemaking is the tangible struggle, the psychological struggle to understand the world in a new context and to personalize the information in a meaningful way.

### Crucial Skepticism

Expect dissidence and dissidents. A lot of students have tough exteriors – many football players, many gang members, many people who support war and who believe in “an eye for an eye.” What happens first in class is a great amount of doubt. Raised voices and loud dissent about the choice to respond to conflicts through nonviolence. Students rarely believe it’s going to work. They have their personal guards up and their educational filters on. This is why teaching nonviolently is so important. One can’t teach about nonviolence without teaching through nonviolence.

To begin teaching a course on nonviolence in the United States to an audience of high school students who have been groomed on MTV and X-treme reality shows, beginning the semester with a rational discussion of the merits of nonviolence is laughable. Students are not always easy converts to nonviolence because they lack the historical and experiential evidence that it can work, and nonviolence requires vision and patience, which is a lost value in modern society. Students are exceptionally impatient. They have grown up in a fast food, fast talk, easy come, easy go culture which requires thirty second sound bytes and flashy images to capture their attention. Many times, nonviolence does not work like this. Nonviolence works in subtle ways, often in ways that many people might not consider “success” by conventional standards.

At first I was intimidated by the resistance I encountered by some of the students. As the peacemaking class continued, however, I began to realize the class was not only about the content and giving evidence of when and where and how nonviolence operates, but also teaching the content in a nonviolent manner. Essentially, the patience I want my students to understand, I must also employ. More than once I drew optimism from remembering my mentors whose patience and skill made the material come to life and I began to lean on the teachings which helped me to make sense of the nuances of nonviolence.

### Figuring Out Violence and Nonviolence

Violence has a very simple dynamic. Jim Lawson, pastor Emeritus of the Holman United Methodist Church and architect of the Civil Rights movement, says that the “might makes right” polarity of violence is simplistic because it only takes the physically stronger person to make the other say “uncle.” Violence says, “I’m bigger, I’m stronger. I have more power, more money, more weapons, more strength, more influence. I can make you do what I want because you fear

me.” Violence is intimidation and coercion, depriving people of free will and their conscious choice. Violence is isolation and separation, making people feel alone and secluded. Violence capriciously and systematically segregates people. Violence creates the “us versus them” situation where people can learn to hate and fight and go to war with people because of artificial categories that power holders claim makes one group better than another group.

Put into relevant terms for students, this begins to make sense. Ask a sophomore how the various groups or “cliques” at school use their power and influence to make other students feel inferior. Ask students if everyone gets invited to parties, if everyone is in the “cool” crowd, if everyone gets treated the same. More than likely, it will be readily evident to students how the dynamic of violence works.

Making the concepts of violence and nonviolence relevant is the key to bringing students onboard for the semester.

Nonviolence is a multitude of options, not just a “fight or flight” one-or-the-other choice like violence is. It requires, at the very least, creativity. It’s tough to conceptualize, though, because there’s no one right answer. The difference between nonviolence and violence is like the difference between giving an essay exam and giving a multiple-choice test.

One of my students once wrote, “Nonviolence is organized and constructive, and the main point is to send a message or resolve something. It is positive and purposeful. Nonviolence is not being passive, though, not letting people walk all over you. Nonviolence is about standing up for justice, or laying down for it if that is your form of protesting, but certainly not standing back.”

A friend of mine once told me that “peace is an inside job.” That is really the message of the first part of the class – to build a classroom culture where personal peacemaking is taught, experienced and lived.

Another one of my students told the class that “you yourself need to be at peace, because when you are at peace with yourself, you can start spreading peace elsewhere.”

## **Hot and Cold Violence**

It’s important to give students a language to talk about violence, to facilitate their becoming more articulate in the way they speak and think about their lives and the world. Giving the meaning of violence more finesse helps students refine its meaning, making the scope of what can be considered violent much more vast. As mentioned in the introduction, Colman McCarthy first used these terms to describe a difference in scale and visibility which distinguishes different kinds of violence.

Hot violence is the visceral response which comes from overt acts of violence – a fist fight, the bloody uncensored scenes of war, the twin towers of the World Trade Center falling on September 11, 2001 are all hot violence. Hot violence makes the front pages of the newspaper. Rapes, stabbings, and murder are all forms of hot violence.

Cold violence, on the other hand, is much more subtle and pervasive. Cold violence is the undercurrent, the steady, institutionalized oppression like homelessness, joblessness, malnutrition and poverty that seem so much like static components of modern life that people rarely question their origins or their persistence.

The cold violence of September 11, 2001 was that on that day, as happens every day, more than 40,000 people worldwide died of hunger-related illnesses.

Many students come to class thinking that humans have a genetic predisposition toward violence. Because they are surrounded by violent images, by conflict, by structures that disallow their investigating nonviolent options, many students believe that nonviolence doesn't work.

The goal of the first lessons on nonviolence is not to convince the students right away. In fact, the goal of the course is not to convince them of anything at all other than believing in themselves and their power to learn and think critically. One quote by Martin Luther King, Jr. aptly summarizes the goal of the course: The arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice. If my students don't understand what nonviolence is about at the end of thirteen weeks, I don't feel defeated. How can I expect to even put a dent in my students lifetimes of experience in an extraordinarily violent world. At the very least, I feel grateful that they stayed with the class and began to think critically about the issue of nonviolence, regardless of whether or not they accept it into their lives.

Most importantly, the goal of the class is not to create a plethora of disciples regurgitating the teacher's beliefs; the peace teacher is the neutral facilitator, allowing students to find their voices, making them probe deeper into their assumptions, backgrounds and operating principles. The peace teacher must be vigilant not to indoctrinate but rather foster true learning, cooperation and creativity.

## CLASS CREED

A teacher-friend of mine from Southern California introduced me to the following class creed which I have in turn introduced to students in my classes. It embodies the principles of peace education through discipline, self-respect and accountability. All too often, because of the rampant academic violence through formal schooling, students easily give over too much authority to teachers which rightfully belongs to them! They expect teachers to do everything for them – to think for them, to decide their grades for them, and to be their surrogate brains and consciences. This creed encourages students to stand up for themselves and take back their education. It also disallows students to blame more than their fair share on teachers, alleviating some classroom pressure.

**I am a self-reliant and reliable individual.** I believe that society does not owe me anything. I will not be paid for having a brain, but rather for using my brain.

**I will be a lifter**, not a leaner; **a learner**, not a loser. I will give myself to learning and develop my thinking, civilize my heart, and give wings to my imagination. I will grow to appreciate the beauty of Art and of Music. I will become best friends to Truth, Honor and Respect.

Discouragement will never defeat me because I know that I can move a mountain by first carrying away the small stones and then continuing patiently.

**I am responsible for myself.** I make my own choices and accept the consequences. I cannot blame television nor my friends, parents, or teachers for my mistakes. Failure is not the enemy of success. I must pull apart my mistakes, looking for the reason where I went wrong, and then use my mistakes, not for stumbling blocks, but for stepping stones.

I will, especially when nobody is looking, do all the good I can to all the people I can in all the ways I can as often as I can for as long as I can. The happiness I give away will turn



again to shine on me, and I will let others light their own candles on the warmth and radiance of my service and success.

## ***QUOTES TO EXPLORE***

*“If we believe that active nonviolence is an effective alternative to flight or fight in other areas of life, we need to explore how we can respond nonviolently in this most critical of all personal dangers, when an assault occurs. Here are some true stories about people who were not experienced in nonviolence, not committed to ahimsa, but who did just the right nonviolent thing at the right time.”- Gerard A. Vanderhaar*

1. How would you explain the idea of “fight or flight”? Are these the only two options for a person faced with a violent situation?
2. Does “fight” mean “kill”? Can you fight someone nonviolently? How might you protect yourself and the other person in a fight, if you choose this option?
3. Does “flight” mean “run away” only? How are people who choose this option often labeled? Why might this label be inaccurate or unfair?
4. If you were to be attacked, what are other options besides fighting back with a willingness to injure or even kill your attacker? Do you know of personal evidence where doing something other than fighting back has worked to stave off an attack?

*“Most importantly one comes to realize that the ‘end’ does not justify the ‘means’: we get what we do, not what we hope for or intend. You cannot improve a man through punishment, nor can you bring peace through war or brotherhood through brutalization.”- Edward Guinan*

1. Where does the concept of “ends and means” come from? Where throughout history have people chosen just or unjust means to arrive at their desired end?
2. If we want to have a just and fair ending, must we use just and fair methods to reach our goals? Can you have a just ending even if you use unjust means? Think of some examples to support your opinion.
3. What do we have to show for our efforts if we use less than honorable means to reach our goals, and then fail to reach our goals. What remains? Is it “the thought that counts” or do we need a tangible result?
4. How does a person decide what means to use to reach the end s/he desires?

*“We have been too willing to discuss violence in terms of ghetto uprisings, student unrest, street thievery, and trashing, and have been unwilling to direct our attention to the more pathological types of violence that are acceptable-the types that daily crush the humanity and life from untold millions of brothers and sisters.” – Edward Guinan*

1. How else can we view violence other than the above definitions?
2. What is hot and cold violence? What are examples of each from your personal life? From your local community? From your country? From the world?
3. Why is it necessary to make the distinction between the different types of violence?
4. Why do we tend to only hear about hot violence?

*“Nonviolence means taking the responsibly for aiding the direction of human communication and brotherhood. Nonviolence means an active opposition to those acts and attitudes that demean and brutalize another and it means an active support of those values and expressions that foster human solidarity.” - Edward Guinan*

1. What is nonviolence?
2. Why is creativity such an integral part of nonviolence?
3. How would you explain nonviolence to a skeptic?
4. What are the physical, emotional and societal risks that a person takes in practicing nonviolence?
5. Why don't more people know about and practice nonviolence? Can it be a way of life? How might it become integrated into a person's daily life? Into societal institutions? Into global policies?

*“While it is indisputable that wars have been fought, the fact that they seem to dominate our history may say more about how history is presented than about what actually happened.” - Alfie Kohn*

1. Why can we recall more about our history in wars than our history in peace? Why is war seen as more dynamic than peace?
2. Is peace more than the absence of war? Why can we define what “a war” is but have difficulty defining what “a peace” is? What is peace?
3. Who writes history? Who controls the narrative of what happened and how it is presented? Is history written by the winners or the losers?
4. Does it matter from whose perspective history is written? How are people and stories included or excluded depending on who is doing the telling?

*“The story of the human race is characterized by efforts to get along much more than by violent disputes, although it's the latter that make the history books. Violence is actually exceptional. The human race has survived because of cooperation, not aggression.” - Gerard A. Vanderhaar*

1. Why has nonviolence been systematically written out of textbooks and school curriculum?
2. What might administrators and teachers think about proposing “math day” in the same way that they propose “peace day”? How have we segregated peacemaking, making it a special occasion rather than a way of life? Could you learn everything you needed to learn about math if teachers only taught it once a year?
3. How can concepts of peacemaking be integrated into every subject matter in school? How can the curriculum be amended to incorporate more information about peace and nonviolence?

*“Technical progress, extension of knowledge, do indeed represent progress, but not in fundamentals. The essential thing is that we become more finely and deeply human.” - Albert Schweitzer*

1. Why is Albert Schweitzer skeptical about technology? Is technology always good? Is progress always good? Can technology and progress ever be used in unjust or improper ways? If yes, when?
2. What is a recipe for becoming “more finely and deeply human”? What does Schweitzer mean by this?
3. How can technology separate people from their basic humanity?

*“Those who do good should not expect people to clear the stones from their path on this account. They must expect the contrary: that others will roll great boulders down upon them. Such obstacles can be overcome only by the kind of strength gained in the very struggle. Those who merely resent obstacles will waste whatever force they have.” - Albert Schweitzer*

1. How can being nonviolent complicate a person’s life? Where might they encounter resistance? Have you encountered resistance in being nonviolent or choosing a peaceful alternative rather than resorting to violence?
2. What literal form might the “boulders” take?
3. What lessons have you learned through the struggles you have faced? Would you have learned them without the process of struggling? What role did the “process” take?

*“Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment.” – Thich Nhat Hanh*

1. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk from Vietnam, writes about breathing being the link between our mind and our body. Do you encounter times when your mind is thinking one thing and your body is doing another? Is it important for our mind and body to be unified? How does it feel to be “torn” between what you are thinking and what you are doing? What do you do when this happens?
2. What if classes in school began by conscientious breathing? What problems do you think might be averted if teachers and students took the time to breathe together? What happens when people forget to breathe?
3. Have you ever been told to “clear your mind” and erase all of your thoughts? Because many people find this difficult, how might breathing “in and out” and naming those breaths be helpful?

*“In my tradition, we use the temple bells to remind us to come back to the present moment. Every time we hear the bell, we stop talking, stop our thinking, and return to ourselves, breathing in and out, and smiling.”- Thich Nhat Hanh*

1. Where do you hear bells throughout the day? Make a list of all the instances and write or say how you feel about each bell. Summarize how you feel when you hear these bells.
2. Do bells evoke a positive or negative feeling for Thich Nhat Hanh? Why?

*“If you do not tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell it about other people.” – Virginia Woolfe*

1. What does it mean to tell the truth about yourself? If you wanted to know the truth about yourself, how would you go about learning that information?
2. What is easier: recognizing the truth about yourself or about other people? Why?
3. Are there truths about ourselves that we would rather not look at? Do you see yourself the same way that others see you?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

nonviolence, peace, violence, hot violence, cold violence, conflict, pacifism, empathy, sympathy

## **SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE**

Human Nature Isn't Inherently Violent, by Alfie Kohn  
If We Listen Well, by Lanza del Vasto  
Nonviolent Response to Assault, by Gerard A. Vanderhaar  
Teaching Reverence for Life, by Albert Schweitzer  
What Would You Do If, by Joan Baez

## **FOR THE CLASSROOM**

### **Peacemaker pop quiz**

Objective: A beginning-of-the-semester exercise to help students orient themselves in their world and familiarize themselves with vocabulary like conflict, violence and nonviolence which they will be using throughout the semester.

The exercise begins with a pop quiz over prominent figures in the world. (I usually promise an automatic A to the students who get all ten answers correct, as an incentive.) On a piece of paper, students write their answers to the following prompts:

Who are:

1. Stonewall Jackson
2. Thomas Jefferson
3. Arnold Schwarzenegger
4. Ronald Reagan
5. Woodrow Wilson
6. Dorothy Day
7. Jeanette Rankin
8. A.J. Muste
9. Mairead Maguire
10. Mkhuseleli Jack

After reading all the names, ask the students to identify each person. The first five should be easy. The last five get tougher. You may use these suggested people or substitute your own favorite famous characters in this list.

The following questions are helpful to ask after reading and debriefing the answers to this list:

1. Why are the first five people very familiar to us?
2. What contributions to our world do they have in common?
3. Why are we unfamiliar with the last five people on the list?
4. Are their contributions less important?
5. Why have nonviolent leaders been written out of history?
6. Create your own list.

Following a discussion of these questions, consider reading aloud in class "If We Listen Well" by Edward Guinan from the Solutions to Violence textbook. This essay segues into the next lesson plan which explores definitions of the terms conflict, violence and nonviolence.

### **Nonviolence Grid**

**Objective:** Provide forum for safe self-expression and opportunity to experience differences in opinion.

**Time:** Half hour to forty minutes, plus time to process and de-brief.

**Rules:** Agree to talk one person at a time, and agree not to use personal insults even if you strongly disagree with someone else's opinion.

The Nonviolence Grid is a technique used by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the Peacemaker Training Institute. This exercise allows students to explore their feelings toward various social issues while physically moving themselves throughout the room, experiencing their opinions in spatial proximity to their classmates. The game begins by placing four large cards on the ground in the cardinal directions (N,S,E,W). The North and East cards have large "plus" symbols, and the West and South cards have "minus" symbols on them. The North/South axis represents "better for society" and "worse for society" and the East/West axis represents "more violent" and "less violent".

Students should help the teacher to move desks to the periphery of the classroom so there is enough room to move. The teacher first tells the students to stand in the middle of the room at the start of the game. The teacher may move around the room as well but refrain from participation. The teacher reads out the following "opinion statements" and then asks students to move in the room to the place on the grid which best fits their feelings toward the statement. For example:

Teacher: "If a storefront is vandalized, is it better or worse for society, more or less violent?"

The students then move to their places on the grid. The teacher asks various students to justify why they are standing where they are. The teacher may spend between 3-5 minutes on each question, and students are allowed to move if they change their minds. Students may volunteer their answers or the teacher may call on them to answer.

The following questions are samples, but teachers are encouraged to invent other questions, especially ones which are relevant or more age-appropriate in their classrooms and/or schools:

- Is it more or less violent, better or worse for society to arm airline pilots?
- Is it more or less violent, better or worse for society to arm school teachers?
- Is it more or less violent, better or worse for society to sacrifice some of our rights to privacy in order to combat violence like terrorism?
- Is it more or less violent, better or worse for society to attack someone before they have the chance to attack you?
- Is not eating meat better or worse for society, more or less violent?
- Is participating in a march/boycott better or worse for society, more or less violent?
- Is telling a 'little white lie' better or worse for society, more or less violent?
- Is traveling to another country better or worse for society, more or less violent?
- Is speaking up for someone who needs help better or worse for society, more or less violent?
- Is it better or worse for society, more or less violent to use racial slurs or gender-biased language?
- Is it better or worse for society, more or less violent to only associate with people of your own age/race/social class/etc.?
- **Create your own questions.**

### **Processing the Game**

Since this game requires a great deal of physical and verbal participation, it is important to remember that some students process their learning very differently. A written response from the students may be assigned, as well as oral discussion of the following questions.

1. How did you feel about having other people know literally where you stand on different issues?
2. How did it feel to see that everyone did not agree on the answers?
3. What do you think this game represents in a larger society?
4. Should everyone agree on the answers to these questions?
5. What was difficult about this game?
6. What did you learn about yourself in this game?
7. What did you learn about your classmates in this game?

8. Are there any situations where the outcome is not clear-cut and well-defined?
9. **Create your own questions.**

### **Exploring Interconnectedness**

**Objective:** Helping students understand the idea of interconnectedness, and that the conflict they encounter in their lives is relevant to the conflict occurring in their community, country and world. Students should explore the idea that conflict is universal and that nonviolence is accessible to people of all ages, races, religions, etc.

On the chalkboard, write the word “conflict.” Students should help to generate a working definition of what conflict means, what it sounds like, what it feels like, where it happens and any other relevant contributions for creating a written description of what this word means. Hint: Many times, students will respond with negative comments about conflict. Try to prime them with a question about whether or not conflict can be positive as well. Colman McCarthy, founder of the Center for Teaching Peace, says that conflict is a neutral word that just means, “Something has to change.”

After brainstorming the definition of “conflict”, move to defining “violence”. Ask students if the two words are interchangeable or if they mean different things. One important point to make is that no one is exempt from conflict; you can do this by asking if anyone is currently experiencing any kind of conflict, or if anyone has ever experienced any kind of conflict.

Finally, write the word “nonviolence” on the chalkboard. Ask students what they first think of when they see this word. Many times students will respond by saying, “It’s the opposite of violence.” Others will equate nonviolence with passivity. Sometimes students are perplexed by this word, and it is helpful to start with a dictionary definition. One important element which helps to delineate the difference between violence and nonviolence is that the dynamic of violence is very simple: one force overpowering another. Nonviolence, on the other hand, inherently invites creativity and responding with solutions “outside the box.”

The final element to this exercise involves a spiraling diagram. Start by labeling a point on the chalkboard with the word “me”. What kinds of conflict and/or violence can an individual personally experience? Common answers are conflict within oneself, with parents, friends, teachers, significant others, coaches, bosses, etc. Write the responses on the board, and once that list is exhausted, draw a spiral around those words and label another point “my community”. Where does violence occur in the community? At school? In the neighborhood? With the police or other local authorities? Are there instances of environmental violence or conflict in the area? Are there particular issues which involve community conflict? Interesting responses have been road rage, pollution, domestic violence, gang activity, and police brutality, but by no means is this a comprehensive list.

Draw another spiral around those responses, and label another point “my country”. Where is there violence in the country? What kinds of situations, like child labor, poverty, freedom of speech and assembly, weapons making, and homelessness, can the students identify as being conflicts within their country?

Finally, draw the final spiral around these responses, and mark a point labeled "my world". Have students list conflicts or instances of violence transpiring across the globe. Students often list conflicts in terms of wars, i.e., where violence is actively occurring. Encourage them to think about what wars mean for the people involved. This part of the exercise should provide the final visual component for the students to recognize that the conflicts they experience on a personal level spiral outward to a global level.

## ***RESOURCES***

- *All of One Peace*, by Colman McCarthy
- Alternatives to Violence Project: [www.avpusa.org](http://www.avpusa.org)
- California Association of Student Councils (leadership training): [www.casc.net](http://www.casc.net)
- Common Dreams News Source : [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)
- C-Span video of Colman McCarthy: Service Learning, August 2001 at Georgetown University
- Institute for Peace and Justice: <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/>
- *Peace Is Every Step*, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Fellowship of Reconciliation Peacemaker Training Institute: [www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org)
- The Nonviolence Web: [www.nonviolence.org](http://www.nonviolence.org)
- Website for Alfie Kohn: [www.alfiekohn.org](http://www.alfiekohn.org)





## Chapter 2: What Would Gandhi Do?

### Modern Implications for Gandhi's work

So much is taking place in our world today. The issues of globalization, global warming, arms dealing, inter-ethnic fighting, racism, sexism, homophobia, living wages and a plethora of other problems, many people are left feeling frustrated, disillusioned, or at the very least, confused about what they can do to alleviate the violence of these problems and bring some peace and relief to others in need.

Many people are not certain where to begin because once they start examining one problem, they realize that twenty more problems are attached to that one, and twenty more are attached to each of those twenty. What starts as a local issue can quickly turn global with a few steps of interconnectedness, which can make addressing all the problems in the world one by one seem like a daunting task.

It is no wonder that people feel hopeless and overwhelmed.

Throughout history, nonviolent leaders have certainly faced these obstacles and have left clues for us through their writing and organizing as to how they coped with these same issues. In thinking about how to respond to one situation or another, I began to wonder, "What Would Gandhi Do?" This question has prompted many classroom discussions, taking the conversations in interesting directions when students thought they had examined every alternative.

Colman McCarthy says, "Schools in India offer no systematic teaching of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and organized resistance. Honored, yes. Studied, no. It is the same in the United States with Martin Luther King, Jr., whose life was turned around by Gandhi."

My classroom experience mirrors this statement; the first question I ask when we start the unit on Gandhi is what the students already know about him, and the top three responses are frighteningly vacuous: He's bald, he's dead, he lived in India. Students need to learn more concrete facts about Gandhi to have an idea of why nonviolence is both credible and effective.

What would Gandhi tell the people who struggle with how to respond with compassion to a world filled with violence? He might remind them that they should trust themselves enough to follow their own hearts and processes. In a sense, people can be paralyzed by the legacy of Gandhi. They're waiting for another dynamic leader to tell them what to do and how to fix the situation. They're waiting for the one brilliant idea that will revolutionize the whole perception of the whole world.

And rather than taking it upon themselves to start addressing the problem, people continue to seek out heroes and charismatic leaders. They forget that Gandhi was a regular human being whose only distinction was that he acted on his convictions and encouraged other people to do the same. His people were ready for action because the weight of the problem had reached them. It had arrived on their doorsteps and people could not ignore the British rule any longer. They could not endure the taxation and the discrimination. Perhaps people in the United States will begin to be compelled to action when the repressiveness and the effects of poor social planning reach their doorsteps, too.

At that point, it will be very important to have a wide cadre of people trained in nonviolent action to help guide the movement in a healthy direction.

Gandhi might have a few things to say about our present lifestyle, additionally. So much of what is valued in Western society has to do with external actions, what is demonstrable, what

can be proven. Our culture values action over inaction. A fellow teacher completed her Master's degree thesis on the role of feminine silence in fairy tales. She showed how our culture views silence as powerlessness whereas many Asian cultures view silence as strength. I think Gandhi would be calling us to a more reflective quiet period rather than participating in the clamor of trying to be heard over one another.

What impresses me is Gandhi's commitment to reflection and to sitting with himself and listening for the inner call. I think he'd tell us all to turn off our televisions, unplug our phones, turn off the radios and to find someplace quiet outside to sit on the ground and listen to ourselves. Gandhi honored inaction as much as he honored action. Before he undertook any major campaign, he always took time to reflect, a quality lost in our busy age of over-stimulation and noise.

Gandhi would be concerned with the level of violence in schools, the fights, the weapons and the out of control behavior which precipitates heavy-handed administrative repression. He would be much more worried about academic violence, about the skewed priorities of funding weapons and war rather than libraries and classrooms.

Gandhi also would address teachers and students directly as well, because so much violence centers around school and education. He would revolutionize the school cafeteria, adding more fruits and vegetables, more juices and water, fewer deep-fried foods and sodas and less meat. He would inspire people concerned with the state of education, the lack of true learning and the oppressive tests and accountability measures, to organize and reappropriate education so that students and teachers are supported and given the money, resources and time to learn in a more peaceful environment.

### **Quotes to explore by Gandhi:**

*“The goal is not to bring your enemy to his knees but to his senses.”*

1. What does it mean to bring someone to his/her knees? Describe what it feels like to be brought to your knees. What feelings/emotions arise in this situation?
2. What actions might the person brought to his/her knees want to take afterward?
3. How does being brought to one's knees differ from being brought to one's senses? Which tactic is more permanent? Which one is more humane?
4. How does this expression resonate with Gandhi's notion of turning enemies into friends?

*“An eye for an eye and the whole world goes blind.”*

1. What are the origins of this saying? How do people usually interpret “an eye for an eye”?
2. What does this saying have to do with restorative justice?
3. How does violence symbolically make people “go blind”? What is this a metaphor for?

*“First they ignore you. Second, they laugh at you. Third, they fight you. Finally, you win.”*

1. How did Gandhi arrive at the four steps of how people react to nonviolent campaigns? Why would people ignore you first? What is that a symptom of?

2. What does it mean that people would next laugh at you? How does it feel not to be taken seriously?
3. How would people go about fighting you? What does this mean? How would Gandhi participate in a fight with people?
4. How would Gandhi define “winning”? What would a “win” look like to him?

*“The only devils in this world are those running around in our hearts, and that is where all our battles should be fought.”*

1. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn once wrote that “the line between good and evil runs through every human heart”. How can we define what is good and what is evil in the world if the micro-battle is raging inside of us?
2. Is there such a thing as absolute good or absolute evil? If yes, what are some examples? If no, why not? How do you explain egregious acts of wrongdoing, like the Holocaust or the genocides in Iraq and Rwanda?
3. When people look to define good and evil, why do they often look outside of themselves? Where do the notions of good and evil actually rest?

*“Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but it means the putting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honor, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or its regeneration.”*

1. If nonviolence is supposed to bring about an end to suffering and injustice, why would Gandhi say that it *is* conscious suffering?
2. How do you interpret what Gandhi means by “soul force”? What drives your “soul force” and how do you recognize it? How do you strengthen it?
3. Can one person change an entire system? Is it possible to have that much power in one individual? Can you name any examples?
4. Why do people often get frustrated and think of quitting when they meet resistance from the powerful forces of oppression and might? How close are they to “winning” at that point? What would you advise someone to do who felt overwhelmed or overpowered? What would Gandhi do?

### **Quotes to explore by others:**

*“Most nonviolent groups are destroyed by neglect, not action. Finding their proposals are ignored, not even dignified by a response of reaction, resisters become stifled and the movement dissolves. Perhaps this is why pacifism has been considered weak and ineffective in America.” – Sanford Krolick and Betty Cannon*

1. How does this quote mesh with Gandhi’s quote of people first ignoring you, then laughing at you, then fighting you?
2. Why do people tend to think that nonviolence is weak or submissive? Why would a society consider being weak or submissive a bad thing? Why do people value strength

and domination over passivity? Is it possible that nonviolence could actually be stronger if it appeared weaker?

3. Do people underestimate the power of nonviolence?

*“Schools in India offer no systematic teaching of Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence and organized resistance. Honored, yes; studied, no. It is the same in the United States with Martin Luther King, Jr., whose life was turned around by Gandhi.” – Colman McCarthy*

1. Is it as important that schools designate equal amounts of time to teaching about peace as well as war? Why is peace sometimes considered a controversial topic in schools?
2. Does simply “honoring” a nonviolent leader do justice to the powerful message of his/her life? How could we better “honor” those leaders which get very little attention in textbooks and classrooms today?
3. How do you think your life, your school, your community, your country and your world would be any different if more attention were given to studying how to achieve peace?
4. How does the word “peace” get distorted by politicians and the media to mean something other than peace? The name of one kind of bomb is called the “peacemaker” What do people actually mean when they say the word peace but actually are talking about war?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

ahimsa, satyagraha, civil disobedience, passive resistance

## **SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE**

Ahimsa, by Gandhi

Doctrine of the Sword, by Gandhi

Family Satyagraha, by Eknath Easwaren

Love, by Gandhi

## **A FORCE MORE POWERFUL: GANDHI**

A Force More Powerful, a PBS documentary series by Jack DuVall and Peter Ackerman, outlines six nonviolent successes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including Gandhi’s work to nonviolently expel the British from India.

Teaching about Gandhi in the Solutions to Violence class has made me wonder what is being taught about Gandhi in standard World History classes in high schools. I have found that the most my students know about Gandhi before we start the chapter on him is that he lived in India. Many of them have trouble finding India on a map, and few of them know that one in nine human beings on planet Earth is a Hindu living in India. Our teachings about the greatest nonviolent leader of last century are sorely lacking in content. The students do not know the history of nonviolent struggle and the methods that Gandhi employed to accomplish his goals of freeing India from British rule, which is a tragedy.

So we learn. One of the objectives in teaching a peace class is facilitating students' learning how to use nonviolence as a tool for social change. We are saying we want the children to lead the way in the future, but in reality we don't give them the roadmap or background information to chart a route.

By watching "A Force More Powerful", students gain the perspective on how to achieve change through nonviolent methods, and they themselves glean the strategies that Gandhi used to facilitate nonviolent change. The following list is what my students, semester after semester, have discovered about Gandhi's campaigns in India:

**Gandhi was a letter-writer.** Before undertaking or escalating a campaign, Gandhi wrote a letter to the "person in charge", stating the problem as clearly as possible and outlining what he wanted to have happen, as well as contingency plans for what he would do if his reasonable requests were not granted. For example, Lord Irwin, the British Viceroy of India, received a letter from Gandhi stating that he wanted the repressive salt laws repealed because they inappropriately taxed the people of India. If the laws were not repealed and the salt tax not lifted, Gandhi would lead a march to the sea and commit civil disobedience and make salt, as well as encouraging others to do the same.

Lord Irwin did not respond to Gandhi's letter, so Gandhi followed through with the tactics he had outlined in the letter. He led a month-long march to the sea, accumulating thousands of followers and the attention of global media, and indeed disobeyed the law by making salt.

This was an extraordinarily shrewd tactic on Gandhi's part. He chose salt as a point of contention because it was a unifying element in Indian society. Gandhi detested the divisive caste system which stratified Indian society and made some citizens "untouchable", part of the lowest class. He knew that every human being needs salt and thus every citizen, regardless of their status, class, wealth or ability, could participate in this campaign.

**Gandhi elevated the collective self-confidence of Indian society.** He encouraged Indians to boycott imported British-made cloth which had taken so many Indian jobs. He encouraged the people of India to spin their own cotton for garments. It was a unifying element as well to spin cloth together, taking time out of the day to contribute to the nonviolent campaign he was waging across the continent. Gandhi himself set an example and spun for many hours of the day. Making fabric from cotton also represented one of the most basic elements of nonviolence: anyone can do it and you don't need special permission or a privileged degree. Regardless of age, status, ability, education or wealth, anyone could participate in making cloth.

**Gandhi gave inspirational talks and speeches** to the people of India because he knew that a successful campaign would depend on a critical mass of people participating. Tactically, speeches serve to rally people around a similar cause and augment the collective energy. Speeches motivate the crowd and inspire people to join the cause as well as update a large number of people on developments and strategies for the upcoming nonviolent campaign. People need to be informed to feel like they are a part of the struggle, and rallying speeches fill that need.

**Gandhi orchestrated marches**, which symbolize movement and momentum. He was able to gather people from villages to accompany him in his march to the sea to commit civil disobedience by making salt. He encouraged native Indians to quit their government jobs and renounce complicity with the oppressive British system. The marches showed the British rulers, and the world, that there was mass grassroots support for nonviolent change in India.

**Gandhi encouraged people to go to jail** for the cause of liberating India. If the jails were filled to capacity, the exhaustion on the system would be so great that it might collapse under its own weight. When satyagrahis, people who were followers of Gandhi and believers in nonviolent civil resistance, went to jail for their beliefs, they had the opportunity to confront their jailers with the evils of foreign rule. Filling the jails also made another point: there were not enough jails to hold all the Indians in India - much less fill the jails with one-half or one-fourth of the Indians in India. When people disobeyed laws on a mass scale, their bodies in prison represented a failure of the system to contain the nonviolent movement. Each time the state passed more repressive ordinances, like prohibiting gathering together in public and picketing, Indians had more opportunities to break the law and go to jail.

**Gandhi mandated total nonviolence in the campaign to liberate India.** When a raid was staged for the factory where salt was produced, Gandhi was thrown in jail. But even from jail he insisted that when the nonviolent satyagrahis marched on the salt works, they not even raise a hand to ward off the blows from the guards. Hundreds of people were hurt and killed in this act of civil disobedience, but it proved the point of showing the evilness of imperialism and foreign rule. It was a shock to the dignity of the British who supported a notion of fair-play to strike down hundreds of nonviolent resisters who were completely unarmed.

**Gandhi continued to reiterate that nonviolence is open to all people.** It is not an exclusive club. Children, parents, teenagers, elderly, all classes, all ages, all people from all stratifications and of all abilities can contribute to and support the movement.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who can you influence by writing letters? How does letter writing make a difference? What are some organizations that rely on writing letters as part of their policy and work?
2. Are modern day nonviolent campaigns successful like Gandhi's? How many examples of nonviolent organizing can you name? What are issues that people use nonviolence to address?
3. What problems do nonviolent resisters face in today's struggle for social change? How does the media react to them? How do police and politicians react to them? How do the nonviolent resisters prepare for a nonviolent campaign?
4. How is the openness of nonviolence both a benefit and a potential problem for its practitioners?
5. Gandhi encouraged people to go to jail for their beliefs. Was this responsible of him? Name some adjectives which describe qualities that a person must possess to endure the hardships of jail in a nonviolent campaign. Is there a difference between going to jail for a crime like robbery and going to jail for breaking a law which you consider unjust? If yes, what is the difference?
6. What roles do strategy, discipline and thoughtful planning play in leading a nonviolent campaign?

## **VOMP - A METHOD OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **Vent - Ownership - Moccasins - Plan**

VOMP is a method of conflict resolution that I learned as a Resident Assistant at Georgetown University. Our Area Coordinator, Liz Klafter, taught the staff of eight Resident Assistants about this process so that when our residents, who were mostly first-year students, came to us with relationship or roommate issues, we could facilitate a mediation between the disagreeing parties.

I like teaching about VOMP partly because the name of the process is rather disarming. To say to someone, "We need to VOMP" sounds silly and already adds a sense of levity and humor to a potentially heavy situation.

I also like teaching about VOMP because it is a good process. One of the reasons I believe that people maintain their conflicts and carry them like albatrosses is that we are not comfortable approaching the people we're in conflict with. Through VOMP, we have a process that de-personalizes and de-intensifies the tension between people disagreeing. It becomes less about two people stumbling over words and burdened by hurt feelings and emotions, and more about following a process to clarify the problem and work on resolving the situation.

The first step of VOMP is to Vent. Venting means that each person has an opportunity to tell his/her side of the story uninterrupted, using "I" messages, speaking from first-person point of view. They are able to relate their experience in the conflict while being vigilant not to slander or disrespect their conflict partner. The person listening is practicing active listening skills. Active listening means that each person takes a turn, and while waiting for their turn, they are devoting their entire attention to the words that the other person is saying, rather than trying to formulate immediate responses through interruptions. Each person takes as long as necessary to complete the task of laying out the "facts of the case." Because VOMP is a process, each person knows the steps and is committed to following the steps of conflict resolution.

The second step of VOMP is taking Ownership over the part each person played in the conflict. A conflict is never entirely one-sided. Even in cases where it seems that one person is clearly "in the wrong," both people still have an investment in clarifying the conflict and resolving it, and thus both people can take ownership of their part in the conflict.

I believe that this is a very exciting step in the process of conflict resolution because it allows each person to assume responsibility for their part in the conflict, and since both people are committed to taking responsibility, much of the fire of hostility is extinguished in this step. We all know what it feels like to be deadlocked in a conflict where each person won't budge, where each person feels he/she stands completely "in the right." No one wants to be the first to "back down" for fear that the other will seize the advantage and take the upper hand in the conflict, dismissing the other as submissive or weak. Ownership is a safe step because both people are committed to this process and to identifying their role in the conflict. Taking ownership of our words and deeds is an important step in the development of human relationships and of personal integrity.



The third step of VOMP is Moccasins. Moccasins means standing in the other person's shoes, seeing the conflict from their perspective. This step elicits empathy from each of the individuals. Empathy is a very important element in learning from our mistakes because it allows us to see the effects our words and actions have on other people and is essential in internalizing the ramifications of what we do and say. When you can see a situation from another person's perspective, you can truly say you have learned an important lesson.

The final step of VOMP is Plan. The parties to the conflict have the opportunity to make a plan of action with respect to their situation so that each person is satisfied and so that a foundation is laid in case a future conflict arises. This plan does not have to be set in concrete and is revisable. As a Resident Assistant in college, some of the "plans" that roommates made ranged from agreeing not to borrow each others' clothes without permission, to ensuring that phone messages were relayed in a timely manner, to setting study time and party time hours for their room and living spaces. Plans are important so that the people involved in the conflict feel like they have accomplished something from their discussion.

Not everyone believes in VOMP, however. In presenting this to my students, I have heard many objections as to why VOMP will not work.

Some students say that is unreasonable to think that people in a conflict will want to follow a process with this ridiculous name, and besides, why would disagreeing people want to talk to each other anyway? In response to this, I agree that angry people probably should not VOMP in the midst of their most heated anger. This process works when both people are committed to resolving the dispute. Students also remind me that not everyone knows about VOMP, which is true. I suggest to them that they introduce the idea of VOMP in a living situation, in a relationship, in a classroom before problems arise so that everyone knows about the process prior to a conflict.

Students also sometimes believe that both people will not be fair in resolving the conflict through VOMP. In this case, they might want to find a neutral third-party to facilitate the VOMP session to ensure that the process is followed in a fair manner.

VOMP is a process. It is not necessarily the right way to resolve conflicts. It is also not the wrong way to resolve conflicts either. VOMP simply provides a framework for people to discuss difficult topics and think sincerely about their roles and their responsibilities as well.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Which conflicts in your life might be resolved through VOMP?
2. What do you think are the strengths of VOMP?
3. What are its weaknesses?
4. How young or old do the people using VOMP have to be?
5. Are there any situations where VOMP would not work?
6. Could VOMP be applied to international conflicts or should it only be used in interpersonal ones?

## GANDHI'S NINE STEPS OF PEACEMAKING

**Objective:** To learn about Gandhi's nine steps for peacemaking and apply them to everyday life.

**Time:** One class period

**Preparation:** Colman McCarthy has written and taught about Gandhi's peacemaking steps for the past twenty years in the "Solutions to Violence" course. Prior to this exercise, have students read "My Faith In Nonviolence" by Mahatma Gandhi to gain a context for the discussion.

**Strategy:** Write the nine steps on a chalk or wipe board or flip chart and have students comment on how each step is applicable to their lives. This exercise is exciting because students can see the difficulties in adopting a nonviolent life philosophy in a very personal way, but they can also see the benefits. This exercise allows them to begin to relate Gandhi's teaching to their unique situations as well as apply these steps to peacemaking efforts at school, in the community, locally, nationally and internationally.

- **Define the conflict.** What is it that you are fighting over? Why is it important to actually state what the disagreement is about? What troubles can people get into when they are fighting about different things? Can one person believe the argument is over one issue and the other person believe the argument is about a completely different issue?
- **Work on what's doable.** It is better to have a small victory than a large failure. When you work on what you can actually do and accomplish, the tangible goals of resolving the conflict seem more real and viable.
- **Resolve the dispute in a neutral place.** Do you want to settle the conflict in the cafeteria at lunchtime? Should you settle the conflict in the faculty lounge in front of everyone? It is important that both people feel like they are on common ground and that one does not have advantage over the other. Colman reminds his students that even war treaties are not signed on the battlefield but rather at a distant, neutral place. Emotions run too high and cloud clear thinking.
- **Don't ask what happened.** Ask instead "What did you do?" Asking what happened elicits emotions and promotes blame. Asking what did you do encourages the person to use "I" messages and focus on the facts of the situation.
- **List the shared elements of the relationship versus the one unshared separation.** The goal of doing this is to get both parties to see that their similarities outweigh their differences. People, even those who are in the midst of a disagreement, still have common ground. We all have the need for love, acceptance, understanding, belonging and attention. These are good places to start when there are many hurt feelings or when the conflict is particularly heated.
- **It's not you versus me but you and me versus our problem.** Conflicts are set up to be oppositional where one person is bad and the other good; one the victimizer and one the

victim; one the evildoer, one the innocent. Aleksandr Solzhentisyn wrote that “the line between good and evil runs through every human heart”. Colman says that “you’re not the problem, and I’m not the problem but rather the problem is the problem”. We have to work together on solving our shared conflict and work at not demonizing the other person but acknowledging their humanity and core value.

- **Work on your forgiveness skills.** Colman says that of the nine steps, this one is probably the hardest. Forgiving someone is so difficult because a wrong done is like toothpaste out of the tube - you can’t put it back in. Dr. King’s wisdom on forgiveness is important as well, saying that true forgiveness means that the evil act no longer stands as a barrier to the relationship, and that we must separate the evil from the evildoer.
- **Work on your listening skills.** Colman also says that a good listener has many friends whereas a poor listener has many acquaintances. I ask my students if they ever find themselves planning their retort or reply as they are “listening” to the other person. True listening means that you are hearing the words, the underlying messages, the heart-messages and the intentions of the person and truly attempting to grasp what they are relating.
- **Purify your heart.** One of my favorite things to ask my students is how they do this. Some say that they play sports, meditate, pray, sleep, hike, write in a journal or talk with friends. Many report that being close to nature makes them feel purified.

These nine steps are good to keep in mind, especially if there is a specific conflict which the parties are participating in the method of conflict resolution called VOMP, also included in this chapter.

**Processing:** Have the students break up into groups of two or three and describe a conflict that is going on in their lives right now (or give each group a specific conflict to address). For example, sibling rivalry, a disagreement with a fellow student or a significant other would work for discussion purposes. Ask the students to apply each of Gandhi’s nine suggestions for conflict resolution to the problem, and ask that they specifically focus on redefining the conflict in terms of humanizing the other person. Students can write or informally journal about how these nine steps can benefit them in their lives as well. Encourage deep thinking and deep writing on this subject.

This exercise is valid and useful throughout the semester, and the teacher should refer to and encourage usage of these steps not only during the Gandhi chapter but in the duration of the class.

## NONVIOLENT POWER CASE ANALYSIS

From the Alternatives to Violence Project, Peace Grows

[www.avpusa.org](http://www.avpusa.org)

1. What are the facts of the conflict?
2. Why use nonviolence?
3. What human need(s) are being denied or are perceived to be denied?

4. What is the nonviolent solution or suggested solution?
5. What nonviolent tactic(s) were used or proposed?
6. Why did or would the tactics work?

I use these questions in conjunction with videos and newspaper articles in class so that the students have a frame of reference with which to analyze the situation. Often students like to work in groups to brainstorm responses to these questions, so dividing the class into groups of four or five is a good technique for more intimate discussion. I also assign these questions as “homework” so that the students have an active engagement with the readings in the Solutions to Violence textbook.

## RESOURCES

- A Force More Powerful: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful>
- Department of Peace: [www.house.gov/kucinich/action/peace\\_legis\\_summary.htm](http://www.house.gov/kucinich/action/peace_legis_summary.htm)
- Everyday Gandhis <http://www.everydaygandhis.com/>
- Hague Appeal for Peace: <http://sajo.itu.int/hapyouth>
- International Peace Bureau: [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org)
- Landegg University: <http://efp.landegg.edu/main.cfm?SID=1>
- Long Night’s Journey Into Day: <http://www.newsreel.org/guides/longnight.htm>
- MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, [www.gandhiinstitute.org](http://www.gandhiinstitute.org)
- Peace Studies in the United States: <http://csf.colorado.edu/peace/> and
- University of Peace [www.upeace.org](http://www.upeace.org)
- [www.educationrevolution.org](http://www.educationrevolution.org)
- [www.wagingpeace.org/new/programs/peaceeducation/index.htm](http://www.wagingpeace.org/new/programs/peaceeducation/index.htm)



## Chapter 3: Compassion and Intentional Living

### REFLECTIONS ON POVERTY AND PRECARITY

My students and I began the third chapter in *Solutions to Violence on radical Catholicism and Jesus as the peacemaker* rather than the extolled and safe religious hero to which modern Christianity has relegated him. Often I hesitate to talk about Jesus in places other than the Catholic school where I teach because of the proselytization which has transpired as well as out of fear of reprimand via the separation of church and state and school edict.

Having said that, I remember that Gandhi believed that the only people who did not see their religion as one of nonviolence were the Christians. Jesus the historical figure is a pacifist and an exemplary radical nonviolent practitioner. Jesus was a rebel. He spoke up for those without recourse in society. He told us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. If we can extract the pacifist message from the religiosity of Christianity, perhaps a wider acceptance of Jesus' message could be heard by an audience who could not hear it in the context of formal religion.

Intentional communities are coming of age in the peacemakers' searches for community, sustainability and service. I can think of no better place to start talking about intentional communities than with the Catholic Worker movement. Catholic Workers have sprouted up all over the United States, but they had their humble beginnings in New York City when Dorothy Day founded a House of Hospitality to address the immediate human needs which were not being addressed by public policy and people in positions of power.

The idea of communal living is a foreign one to most students. In America these days, we're taught to hold on to what we have, taught not to touch people, bump into them or help them when they're down for fear that we might get dragged down too, and taught that the solitary life, that studio apartments are healthy, that our personal spaces are inviolable and that we must have clearly defined boundaries and distinguish between what's 'mine' and 'yours'.

The words "intentional community" are foreign in many ways to students. Intentional means having an intent to do something, like being mindful of what you do, where you live, what you consume, what you purchase and with whom you share. One of the problems for young people in modern society is the idea of actions and consequences and thinking a few steps in advance about where our words and actions can lead us. Thich Nhat Hanh writes about living in the present moment, and I believe him when he says that life can only be encountered in a beautiful way in the present moment. He questions hope when it leads us to think too far into the future and abandon the presence of our current situation. However, impulsive young people often live too much in the present moment, only aware of themselves and their immediate needs. In our age of attention deficit disorder and Ritalin, we have a pandemic problem of negative consequences pursuant to not-well-thought-through actions. Immediate gratification. Fast food. Nine hundred cable television channels. Disposable silverware and fair-weather friends.

Dorothy Day, too, writes about the present moment - about ministering to the needs of her fellow human beings using the available resources and not stockpiling them for another day. The Los Angeles Catholic Worker embodies this today - they empty out their kitchen every day, getting rid of all the fruit, vegetables, bread and soup. Why? Who knows what tomorrow will bring. There are people in need now and we have the resources to attend to those needs. Tomorrow is anyone's guess. The Lord, or our good brothers and sisters from food shares and grocery stores, will provide the rest.

Dorothy Day took the mandate of the Lord's Prayer seriously: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Dorothy Day, much like Mother Teresa, took care of the people who most needed immediate intervention in their lives - the poor, the homeless, the destitute, the single mothers, the alcoholics and the children. She made no judgments about their worth. She admonished none for their present situation. She made every attempt to give whatever was at hand to whoever needed it most - food, clothing, attention, money or simply company. And she questioned the societal institutions which legalized such forms of violence as poverty and homelessness, the disproportionate military budget and the lack of spending on social welfare.

My students were dismayed - surprised at the very least - that Dorothy Day had been arrested for various things throughout her life. Jesus got arrested. Yet we condemn getting into trouble with the law because of its potential implications on our job situation, on our moral standing with our friends and contemporaries, and its association as a naughty taboo. Dorothy Day, Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi did not get arrested because they thought it might make a good posthumous story. They got arrested knowing that it would ostracize them immediately in some circles and that it would create trouble for them with the government and give their critics occasion to rejoice at the "misfortune" of spending time in jail.

Questioning authority is such an important endeavor to consider in this period in time. We are able to heroicize Dr. King, even though he was arrested several times, and Gandhi as well, because they are now dead and it is safe to talk about when they pushed the limits in society because they are harmless from the grave, or so we thought.

Teaching about a shero like Dorothy Day, teaching about her mission and her radical love for helping others, teaching about her ideas on social justice enlivens her ideas and invokes the spirit of her work on earth.

### ***Quotes by Dorothy Day:***

*"How can we say to these people, 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,' when we are living comfortable in a warm house, sitting down to a good table, decently clothed?"*

1. Where do people get the idea that some people are meant to have a hard life and others live easily? What aspects of society keep this belief alive?
2. What do you do to reconcile the worlds of the "haves" and the "have-nots"? Should people with more material goods or comforts have pity on those with fewer? What should the relationship be between people of different social classes? How do you treat people from different walks of life?
3. How does religion reinforce the disparity between those with material wealth and those without it? What should be the role of religion in bridging the gap between those with much and those with little

*"We need always to be thinking and writing about poverty, for if we are not among its victims its reality fades from us."*

1. Why should we not allow ourselves to stray far from the notion of poverty? Why would Dorothy Day want to make sure that people are aware of what it means to be poor?

2. What do you think of organizations which lead experiential “homeless immersion” reality weekends where people who are not homeless can live for a few days like homeless people do? Is this a mockery of the problem of homelessness or is it important for people to have a personal understanding of their situation? What might someone learn from an experience like this?

*“It is simpler just to be poor. It is simpler to beg. The main thing is not to hold on to anything.”*

1. What does Dorothy Day mean by saying it is simpler not to hold on to anything? What do you think she is referring to? What are other options besides holding on to things?
2. What kinds of things do you hold on to? Ideas? People? Memories?
3. Why would Dorothy Day say that having material wealth complicates life? How can she say it is simpler to beg when many people say that money gives security? Is this true?

*“Where there is no love, put love and you will find love.”*

1. Where are places in your life, your school, your community, your country and your world where love does not currently exist but needs to be found?
2. How might the situations in a juvenile prison improve if everyone there practiced this saying? How might the conditions of public education improve if everyone there practiced this saying?
3. Are there times when you have employed this saying? What happened and how did it feel?

### **Quotes by Others:**

*“Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.” - Albert Schweitzer*

1. What other living things do people lack compassion for? What do you think are the reasons for this?
2. Why would Schweitzer place man’s peace contingent upon finding compassion for other living things? What would it take for people to have more compassion not only for other people but for nature and animals?

*“Contemplating the suffering which is unbearable to us, and is unbearable to others, too, can produce awake mind, which arises from the compassion that wishes to free all living beings from suffering.” - The Dalai Lama*

1. How do other people make you suffer unknowingly? How might you do that to other people? What can you do to become more aware of how your words and/or actions create suffering in others?
2. What does it mean to you to have an “awake mind”? How can you become more awake? Why do people sometimes prefer to be “asleep” rather than “awake”?



*“If we could read the secret history of our enemies we should find in each person’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.” - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

1. What would Longfellow say is behind the meanness of our enemies? How would we find this out?
2. How can knowing about someone’s past help to make sense out of his or her behavior in the present? Why might doing this be important? What could you learn from it?

*“Much violence is based on the illusion that life is a property to be defended and not to be shared.” - Henri Nouwen*

1. How do people defend their lives as property? In what ways do we not share ourselves? What things can people truly own?
2. Does your life belong to you? What things in life belong to an individual person?
3. Who decides who gets the amount of property a person can acquire? What accounts for the fact that some people have more than others?

*“Two intertwined principles...at the core of (a) proposed Constitutional amendment: the right of every person who wants a job to have one, and the right of every person who works to earn a living wage.” – Bill Quigley*

1. What is a living wage? Is minimum wage a living wage? What is the minimum wage in your state? What is the federal minimum wage?
2. How much money does it take a family of four to survive each month? What factors should be considered in calculating this? Can a one or two-income family survive each month making minimum wage?
3. Would a Constitutional amendment help to guarantee that everyone can support him or herself and live in dignity? What is meant by the term “America’s working poor”?
4. Who is primarily affected by poverty in the United States? Why are people poor? What are people doing to alleviate the effects of poverty? What can you do?

*“As it happens, the wall between us is very thin. Why couldn’t a cry from one of us break it down? It would crumble easily, it would barely make a sound.” – Rainer Maria Rilke*

1. What kind of wall between people does Rilke describe? What kinds of walls do you have around yourself? What are other people’s walls?
2. How could a cry break down a wall? Is this a good thing? What would this mean for how people understand each other?

*“Isn’t this the moment when caring and compassion would be most appropriate?”  
– Chellis Glendenning*

1. When is the right time to start to care and be compassionate? What things would you start with if you had to right now?

2. What does it mean to have compassion? List a few examples of when you have seen compassion in action.
3. How does it feel to be on the receiving end of someone else's caring?

*“Much trouble and blood would be saved if we opened our hearts more.” - Chief Joseph*

1. What does it mean to “open our hearts”? How would you go about doing that?
2. Why would having an “open heart” spare shedding blood and/or creating trouble? Why does blood get shed and trouble created? What are the personal and social conditions that allow violence to occur?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

community, intentional communities, precariousness, plowshares, poverty,

## **SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE**

Blessed are the Peacemakers, by Father John Dear, S.J.  
 Dorothy Day, by Colman McCarthy  
 Poverty and Precarity, by D. Day  
 The Scandal of the Works of Mercy, by D. Day

## **FOR THE CLASSROOM**

### **Intentional Communities Investigation**

Intentional communities can provide much insight into how people can reclaim a sense of community which is often lost in modern culture. One idea is to write a letter to a member of an intentional community and ask questions about what life is like there, and how it might differ from living in an apartment building or neighborhood. Students might be interested in knowing reasons why people choose to live in the intentional community. They can ask about what brought individuals to the community, their story and history, and what difficulties they have found since becoming a member of the community. Ask also what they have found as benefits or positive attributes to living as a part of the community. Make sure to provide a return address so that members of the community can write back.

In-class questions:

1. What does it mean to be a part of a community? How do communities define themselves?
2. Which community or communities are you a part of?
3. How has modern life made being a part of a community more difficult? How does society regard the ‘individual’ in relationship to the larger group?

4. If you could create your own intentional community, what would it look like? Where would it be? How many people would live there? How would people know that they were a part of the community?
5. Who would you ask for advice about starting a community? What projects would be important to work on together?
6. How would you deal with problems or disputes in your community?

## RESOURCES

- Catholic Worker programs: [www.catholicworker.org](http://www.catholicworker.org)
- Children's Defense Fund, [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
- *Ending Poverty as We Know It*, by William P. Quigley
- *I'd Rather Teach Peace*, by Colman McCarthy
- Intentional Communities: [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org)
- *It's a Meaningful Life: It Just Takes Practice*, by Bo Lozoff
- John Dear, S.J., [www.fatherjohndear.org](http://www.fatherjohndear.org)
- Peacemaker Community: [www.peacemakercommunity.org](http://www.peacemakercommunity.org)
- School of the Americas Watch: [www.soawatch.org](http://www.soawatch.org)
- *The Power of the Poor in History*, by Gustavo Gutierrez
- World Conference on Religion and Peace, [www.wcrp.org](http://www.wcrp.org)

## Chapter 4: Civil Rights, Past and Present

### UNCOMMON KNOWLEDGE

Much like the unit on Gandhi, when we study the Civil Rights movement I ask the class what they know about Dr. King. One semester, my class gave the following description: good speaker, I have a dream, Civil War (which I reminded took place in the 1860's, at which point the student corrected himself and said 'civil rights'), holiday, well-educated. They created a fairly bland, nondescript list – but at least they were thinking.

Then, to my amazement, one of the students asked if Dr. King was black. A senior in high school, she was completely serious.

I didn't know how to respond. At first I thought she was being ironic, but I quickly realized that she had asked a sincere question. I couldn't believe that she didn't know this very basic fact about one of our nation's great leaders.

Students hear about the valiant efforts of Rosa Parks' refusal to move further to the back of the bus and regard the situation as a solitary act of conscience, not knowing that she had attended the Highlander Folk School, one of the preeminent training grounds for nonviolent activists during that era. Rosa Parks acted in concert with a group of supporters and carried out a well-thought-through plan which ignited the Civil Rights movement. Her stance that day was no accident. Just as violent wars are coordinated, nonviolent actions are coordinated – even scripted – and rehearsed with great attention to detail.

When peacemakers are presented as mavericks, as the bright and shining stars who act alone on their own consciences, this is a misrepresentation. Nonviolence requires deliberate, intentional planning.

Our priority in the long term must be on educating that an accurate, complete version of history be taught. Education's most basic purpose should be to help students orient themselves to the rest of the world, a contextualizing education that facilitates learning with integrity and authenticity, not just chewing on, gagging on and spitting out disjointed facts in a vacuous context.

The country is in danger of rotting from the inside out, and the first signs of decay are showing up in education. As a society, are we comfortable with the aforementioned students' misperceptions about their world? Is it important for them to gain realistic perspectives about themselves, their communities and the world? They might very well be good test-takers, but that version of student success has little meaning in the real world. Success has been warped to mean feigning intelligence, guessing correctly on multiple-choice exams and studying a sanitized array of subjects. We should be disturbed by the fact that most students at some point have uttered the following sentence: "I don't remember anything from that class."

We're on the scary precipice of an educational revolution, where teachers and students put down their gradebooks and their backpacks and demand freedom to learn and to teach, and where peacemaking is central to the content and process of education. Students who feel disoriented will find their voices to ask for an education which helps them make sense of their world rather than keeping them buried under busywork so that they don't start asking questions their teachers can't answer. Teachers will stop teaching to state-imposed standards and instead, ask students to define their own standards and co-create an engaging learning environment where basic facts like the race of Martin Luther King, Jr. are not overlooked.

Like a big tsunami, the revolution of liberation education is building momentum, fueled by dissatisfaction with an educational system which alienates rather than unites and which overlooks mediocrity. The revolution of liberation education will teach for real civic participation, where students understand that freedom and democracy are not static principles that were instituted hundreds of years ago, but rather precarious dynamic concepts that they the students have a personal investment in maintaining.

What is perhaps most troubling about my student not knowing about the Dr. King's race is that more important facts, like the struggle for voting rights, for civic participation, is something that is in grave danger presently.

We are building more prisons than schools, incarcerating more people of color, creating more felons that cannot vote.

Our country is criminalizing youth by passing initiatives like Proposition 21 that became law in March 2000 in California. Prop 21 is a piece of legislation which creates a death penalty for people under the age of 18 who commit capital crimes. It allows prosecutors, rather than judges, to determine whether or not the youth will be tried as a minor or as an adult. It redefines 'gang' to mean any three people dressed alike engaged in the same activity. And it is overtly ageist, if not covertly racist.

And restorative justice has little or no place in our criminal justice system.

The colorization of crime means that more racial profiling will go unchecked, more Hispanics and African-American young people will be targeted for random searches and harassment, with less recourse and available legal assistance. According to the California Prison Focus group, almost two million people are imprisoned in the U.S. and 70% are people of color. Our country is building more prisons than schools, and decreasing the funding for education at both the state and federal level.

The non-white experience of the landscape now called the United States is only given cursory attention in formal education, as formal education excludes information like the experiences of the Native Americans. Dr. King would have his work cut out for him were he still alive in the United States. One of the reasons James Loewen, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, gave for students of color not doing well in their history classes is that the history which they study in school is by and large Eurocentric, giving weighted attention to the colonialist perspective rather than the indigenous one. History is, of course, written by the winners, and as such their point of view is what students memorize – or in many cases – sleep through.

The modern-day implications of the Civil Rights movement touch on many social hot topics: race and education, standardized testing, voting rights, affirmative action and racial profiling, to name a few. On most days, some U.S. newspaper will cover some story related to one of those topics. Bring that newspaper to class and discuss it. The Civil Rights movement is now.

## ***QUOTES TO EXPLORE***

### ***Quotes by Martin Luther King, Jr.:***

*"This simply means that there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us."*

1. Can some good be found even in the most reviled members of society like mass murders, tyrants and brutal dictators?
2. How might we go about uncovering the good that is found even in the worst of us? How can we take off our blinders to see the evil in the best of us?
3. Is the world divided into definitive categories of “the best” and “the worst”? Who decides those categories? Are they constant? Are you born into that category or do you choose it?
4. Who gets to define what is evil?

*“Third, we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy but to win his friendship and understanding. At times we are able to humiliate our worst enemy. Inevitably, his weak moments come and we are able to thrust in his side the spear of defeat. But this we must not do.”*

1. Why should we not defeat or humiliate our enemies, even if we have the opportunity?
2. How do you feel when you are humiliated? How to people who are humiliated usually want to resolve the problem? How can the problem be circular and self-perpetuating if we choose to humiliate our enemies?
3. What are our alternatives in dealing with people we consider enemies?

*“Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the [Poverty] Program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor as long as Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destruction suction tube.”*

1. What do you think happened to the program addressing the needs of the poor? Dr. King called these kinds efforts “programs of social uplift”. What do you think he meant by that?
2. What situation drew money away from these poverty programs? What was the outcome of this situation?
3. If you replaced the word ‘Vietnam’ with the word ‘Afghanistan’ or ‘Iraq’, would this statement still be true? Why or why not?
4. How are America’s poor doing today? What is the current level of poverty in this country? Have the necessary funds been allocated to addressing needs of poverty or are the funds still lacking?
5. Are war and poverty connected?

*“This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism, war is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. We must not engage in negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.”*

1. Communism was the perceived threat during the Vietnam war. Is communism still a threat? What events have transpired to change how the United States and the world views communism? Did atomic bombs, nuclear weapons or wars defeat communism?
2. What is our perceived current threat in the United States today? If you replaced the word 'communism' with 'terrorism', would this statement still be true?
3. Can you identify places where you believe terrorism originates? Are there conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice in those areas? Do those areas represent the ideals of democracy?
4. Is it logical to think that if the conditions for 'growing and developing' terrorism were removed, that the global terrorist threats would be removed as well? How would you go about doing this?

***Quotes by others:***

*"The line between good and evil runs through every human heart." – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*

1. Many people in government think that the line between good and evil exists as borders between countries. How would Solzhenitsyn respond to their opinion?
2. What divides good and evil in your heart? Can both qualities exist in a person?
3. Are there any completely good or completely evil people? How could you prove this?

*"A peace that depends on fear is a suppressed war." - Anonymous*

1. It has been said that fear is the worst form of violence. How would you respond to that statement?
2. Can fear be used as a weapon? Are there historical examples or personal examples to illustrate this?
3. How could peace depend on fear? In what forms does fear manifest? Is it a true peace if people are 'peaceful' out of fear? Why or why not?
4. What does 'suppressed war' mean? How would you know if you are living in a suppressed war? What would be the clues?

*"We live in a world where a man is more likely to be tried if he kills a single person than if he kills 100,000." - Kofi Annan*

1. How is it possible that someone could kill 100,000 people and not be tried in a court of justice? What do you think Kofi Annan was referring to?
2. Throughout history, large groups of people have been killed for various reasons, like their religion, race or ethnicity. Within your lifetime, where has this happened in the world? What has become of the people who orchestrated the killing?
3. What methods are used to kill individual people? What methods are used to kill large numbers of people? Are the people who make the tools used for killing both small and large numbers of people responsible for the deaths of those who are killed? Why or why not?

*“Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight.” – Henry David Thoreau*

1. What does it mean to ‘cast your whole influence’? How would Thoreau respond to the idea that voting in every election is fulfilling your entire civic duty?
2. What is it like to be in the majority? Name some qualities or emotions associated with belonging to that group. How does the majority feel about the minority?
3. What is it like to be in the minority? Name some qualities or emotions associated with belonging to that group. How does the minority feel about the majority?
4. If elections do not represent the interests of the minority, what would Thoreau say is their power to change their situation? What does he mean that they can use their ‘weight’ to ‘clog’ the situation?

*“Why do we kill people who are killing people to show that killing people is wrong?” – Holly Near*

1. Is capital punishment, the death penalty, legal in your state? What are the legally approved ways of putting people to death in the United States? How many countries in the world use the death penalty as a form of punishment?
2. Where does the idea for the death penalty originate? By putting people to death for certain crimes, as a society are we letting the criminals set the moral tone for punishment?
3. The saying ‘an eye for an eye’ originally was meant to limit the level of violence done against someone who committed a crime, i.e. someone could not be punished more harshly than the weight of their crime. How is this notion of ‘an eye for an eye’ interpreted presently?
4. Is capital punishment used fairly and evenly in the United States? What are the demographics, i.e. race, economic status, origin, of people who are put to death for crimes they committed? Are mentally handicapped people, foreigners or innocent people allowed to be executed in the U.S.?

*“The value of human dignity means that we are worth more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” – Sister Helen Prejean*

1. What do you think this statement means? Is it a comforting thought? What is human dignity, how do we attain it and how do we lose it?
2. In thinking about the worst thing you have ever done, does that event or action represent all that you are? Is it the whole picture of you? How would you explain or communicate to people your other good qualities if all they knew was this one worst event?
3. Sister Helen Prejean works with death row inmates. How do you think this statement applies to their situations?



## CONCEPTS TO DEFINE

civil disobedience, hassle lines, discipline and creativity, civil rights, Proposition 21, juvenile injustice, capital punishment, retributive and restorative justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, VORP, genocide

## SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE

Dead Man Walking, by Sr. Helen Prejean

Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam by, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Loving Your Enemies, by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Pilgrimage to Nonviolence, by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Inhumane Way of Death, by Willie Darden

The Pains of Life, by Joe Giarratano

## RESOURCES

- A Time for Justice, film by Charles Guggenheim
- American Civil Liberties Union, [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)
- AWOL Magazine, [www.objector.org/awol/index.html](http://www.objector.org/awol/index.html)
- California Prison Focus, [www.prisons.org](http://www.prisons.org)
- Children's Defense Fund, [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
- *Dead Man Walking*, by Sister Helen Prejean (also a movie)
- Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, [www.mvfr.org](http://www.mvfr.org)
- National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, [www.ncadp.org](http://www.ncadp.org)
- *No More Prisons*, by William Upsi Wimsatt
- Prison Activist Resource Center, [www.prisonactivist.org](http://www.prisonactivist.org)
- Project on Youth Militarism, [www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm)
- *Savage Inequalities*, by Jonathan Kozol
- Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

## Chapter 5: Local and Global Nonviolent Action

### Students Taking Action

In the past few years since the World Trade Organization protests of 1999 in Seattle, Washington where demonstrators rose up against capitalism and nouveau imperialism, a vast array of people have startled their consciences awake and begun to examine their role in creating an active peace in their local communities and outward into the world.

The movement has been led largely by students who have practiced nonviolence and put their skills into action, learning about local politics and global affairs. They have run successful campaigns to get progressive candidates into office. They have lobbied. They have marched, been tear-gassed and arrested. They have traveled to distant lands like Colombia, Palestine and Kashmir to expose the injustices and human rights abuses that had been previously unnoticed. They have taken unconventional jobs, forsaking 401k's for in-kind learning opportunities. They practice consensus and are challenging racism, ageism and sexism on personal and institutional levels.

There is a growing understanding that nonviolence is not an accident. It's not like the osmosis where you leave your wish for world peace under your pillow and hope that by some magical coincidence when you wake up it will have happened. Peacemaking takes work, practice, failure, revision and cooperation.

People worldwide have reignited an awareness of issues ranging from global war to AIDS to prison and educational racism to environmental degradation to immigration and border issues to child labor rights. They are making their demands for justice and peace more critical by risking arrest, police brutality and indefinite detention.

Global nonviolent action is starting locally, with coalitions of peace activists, labor groups and students, and is making ripples internationally with the help of technology like the internet and satellite phones. Independent media is helping to spread their messages when corporate media fails to cover important issues fairly.

Their grassroots efforts are shaping the new century and impacting how a civil democracy functions.

### QUOTES TO CONSIDER

*“Nonviolent action has a long history but because historians have often been more concerned with other matters, much information has undoubtedly been lost. Even today, this field is largely ignored, and there is no good history of the practice and development of the technique. But it clearly began early.” – Gene Sharp*

1. What other matters have historians been concerned with, other than reporting and writing on nonviolent action?
2. Why is the field of peacemaking largely ignored in how history is reported and studied?
3. What is the earliest instance of nonviolent action you can remember? What classes or subject matter might lend themselves easily to studying nonviolence, or incorporating nonviolent themes in the subject?

*“Never forget this when you are pondering over your diagrams and equations! There is enough money, enough work, and enough food, provided we organize our resources according to our necessities rather than be slaves to rigid economic theories or traditions. Above all, we must not permit our minds and our activities to be diverted from constructive work by preparations for another war. I agree with the great American Benjamin Franklin, who said that there never was a good war or a bad peace.” – Albert Einstein*

1. Is there such a thing as a good war? How about a bad peace?
2. Is Einstein right – are there enough resources to feed and clothe and take care of everyone if our system is organized based on our necessities? Why does he critique “rigid economic theories or traditions”? What do you think he means by this?
3. How do people’s minds and activities become diverted from constructive work for war preparation? What is constructive work? Would war be considered constructive work? Why or why not?

*“Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?” - Henry David Thoreau*

1. If a person decides to disobey an unjust law, what consequences does s/he risk facing?
2. What is the difference between “human” law and “higher” laws? Which would Thoreau advocate following?
3. If you cannot disobey “human” law, what are your options for addressing injustices within those rules? Can you work through the system to change the system?
4. Can you think of a situation where “human” laws and “higher” laws might be in conflict? How would you deal with this situation?

*“For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: What is once well done is done forever.”- Henry David Thoreau*

1. What does this quote have to do with individual action? Do you have to do something big in order to accomplish good?
2. What does Thoreau mean by saying that “what is once well done is done forever”? Can you undo an act of kindness?
3. What small steps can you take to start creating good in your area? Where does positive action start?

*“Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.” – Henry David Thoreau*

1. Do governments imprison people unjustly? Are there innocent people in jail?
2. Might governments imprison people who violate “human” laws even if they claim to be following a “higher” law? How does society deal with this? How do people look on people who go to jail for following “higher” laws? What historical figures have done this?
3. Is prison the only place where just people belong? What does Thoreau mean by this?

*“Very few people chose war. They chose selfishness and the result was war. Each of us, individually and nationally, must choose: total love or total war.” – Dave Dellinger*

1. Why might selfishness lead to war? Whose selfishness leads a country into war? How are you selfish? Is it selfish that the United States makes up only 5% of the world’s population yet it uses 25% of its resources?
2. How does your choice to be selfish or selfless affect others? What kind of selfishness is Dellinger referring to in this quote?
3. What is the link between selfishness and war? How does Dellinger make this leap? Draw a diagram of how selfishness, either personal or national, can lead to disagreements or war. Is the same selfishness that can be found among families or friends the same kind of selfishness found between nations? Is the outcome the same?

*“I wonder what the engineers, technicians and workers who make weapons all day long for killing their neighbor can possibly be thinking of. They are not working for a living; they are working for dying.” – Adolfo Perez Esquivel*

1. How can a society that produces weapons of mass killing begin to examine transforming the war economy to a peace economy? Why does war make more money than peace? Who profits from making weapons?
2. Should the people that Esquivel says are working for dying – the engineers, technicians and workers – feel guilt for doing their jobs? Have other people throughout history tried to escape culpability for participating in killing by saying that they were “just doing their job”?
3. Would you take a job that you knew might possibly kill someone else with whom you had no quarrel? How would you go about making this decision?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

nonviolent action, boycott, radical, revolutionary, strike, unjust, critical mass, capitalism, imperialism, careers with a conscience

## ***SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE***

Albert Einstein on Pacifism

Letter to Ernesto Cardinal, by Daniel Berrigan

Nonviolent Civilian Defense, by Liane Ellison Norman

Nonviolent Weapons of the Spirit, by Colman McCarthy

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience, by Henry David Thoreau

Patriotism or Peace, by Tolstoy

The Judge & the Bomb, by Judge Miles Lord

The Politics of Nonviolent Action, by Gene Sharp

The Technique of Nonviolent Action, by Gene Sharp

## FOR THE CLASSROOM

The following questions and scenarios can be used as points of entry into discussions about global nonviolent action and empathy for others around the world.

**Exercise 1:** Begin by asking students to journal for a few minutes in their notebooks or on a piece of paper about their very first memory. Pose the question, “What is your first memory as a child?” After ten minutes, offer to let the students share their first memories with a partner or in a large group for ten minutes. Prepare a list of developing countries or countries that were at war around the time when your students were born (ex: 1990 during the first Gulf War). Ask the students what they know about their same-age counterparts in those countries and keep a running list on the chalkboard or white board of all concrete facts that the students volunteer. Ask the students to list what they think the people their age in the other countries know about them. In the last ten minutes of class, pose the question for either journaling or discussion, “What are the possibilities of peacemaking in a world where people do not know each others’ experiences?”

**Exercise 2:** Begin by asking students separate three vertical columns on a piece of paper. Ask them to write a list of their talents or things they are gifted at doing in one column. In the next column ask them what their life goals are, or how they want to be of service in their lives. In the last column, ask them to list what they are doing in pursuit of these goals, or how their daily actions are sending them in the direction they want to eventually go. In processing these thoughts, discuss with the students what having a “career with a conscience” means and give examples.

**Exercise 3:** Before class, find the news and opinion sections of a newspaper and thumb through the articles, finding five questions from five different articles or op-ed pieces. Write the questions on the board or type them and hand them to the students. Divide the students into groups of four or five students per group, and give each group the news and opinion sections. Ask the students to do a “scavenger hunt” for the answers. Answering the questions should take approximately 40 minutes. During the remainder of class, ask each group to give the answers they found to the questions and check for clarity, accuracy and comprehension with the other groups.

## RESOURCES

- Seeds of Peace, [www.seedsofpeace.org](http://www.seedsofpeace.org)
- Greetings From Missile Street, video of Iraq from Voices in the Wilderness
- John Pilger collection, <http://pilger.carlton.com/>
- Amnesty International, [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- Peace Brigades International, [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org)
- Interalianza, [www.interalianza.org](http://www.interalianza.org)
- International Solidarity Movement, [www.palsolidarity.org](http://www.palsolidarity.org)
- Middle East Children’s Alliance, [www.mecaforpeace.org](http://www.mecaforpeace.org)
- Voices in the Wilderness, [www.vitw.org](http://www.vitw.org)

- Students for a Free Tibet, [www.tibet.org/SFT/](http://www.tibet.org/SFT/)
- United Farm Workers, [www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org)
- A Bug's Life, <http://www.pixar.com/featurefilms/abl/>
- Free The Children, [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)
- *From Yale to Jail*, by Dave Dellinger



## Chapter 6: Women in the Peacemaking Process

### Balance and Equity

One of the most crucial elements of modern peacemaking is bringing about a balance between men and women and between patriarchy and matriarchy. Embedded in human history are countless stories of women's contributions to society and family, invisible in the eyes of those who write history for us to study, discuss and repeat. Women's voices have been shouted over and ignored, and feminine wisdom abandoned for mechanistic thinking which helps the world to make sense through science and innovation. Descartes and Newton were two people who helped to create a break in consciousness, from living in tune with the seasons to viewing the world as a clock and seeing humans as having the power to control nature as though we were something distinct from it.

A global movement to remember women's influence and knowledge about medicine, family, balance, healing and participation is bringing about new understandings for humanity's future. Societies are beginning to examine stereotypes and shatter glass ceilings, making room for a fresh way of creating space for both women and men to forge a balanced relationship rooted in respect and appreciation of difference.

Young women especially are starting to draw the connections between racism, poverty, education and opportunity, questioning the male-dominated leadership and challenging the status quo. Their modern-day heroes are Barbara Lee, the only member of the House of Representatives to vote against vast and unchecked war after the terrorist attacks of September 11; Arianna Huffington, the columnist whose lambasting words rattle corporations; Julia Butterfly Hill whose tree-sitting brought a new awareness to the plight of old-growth forests and the lumber industry's environmentally precarious practices; and Winona La Duke, the Vice Presidential Green Party candidate for the 2000 elections and a celebrated indigenous activist and author.

These women have sensed the growing crisis on earth, taking the forms of poverty, lack of potable water and sanitation, pollution, sexual and economic abuse and exploitation and racism which perpetuates hatred, mistrust and confusion. Their lives are living witnesses to the struggle which propels peacemakers. They embody the vision for our future, one where women are respected as equals and valued as partners in the world.

### QUOTES TO EXPLORE

*“Normal men rape because they engage in normal sex – normal sex often being coercive and abusive to women.” – Neal King and Martha McCaughey*

1. What is coercion? In what ways are women coerced into having sex? Is “normal sex” coercive and abusive to women?
2. Where do men learn how women are supposed to behave? Where do they learn how they are supposed to behave? What affect does the media have on male-female relations?



3. How can a woman protect herself from being coerced into sex? What can men do to change this situation?
4. What excuses are often made for a man's behavior when a sexual assault happens?
5. How are men victims as well in this scenario?

*“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” – Audre Lorde*

1. How do young people, especially young women, discover their vision in life? Where does the strength come from to fulfill their goals?
2. What opportunities do women have now that they didn't have twenty years ago? What obstacles do they still face?
3. What does a powerful woman look like? Who is she?
4. How can achieving your vision help you to become less afraid? What is there to fear?

*“I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart, until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise. I choose to risk my significance, to live so that which came to me as a seed goes to the next as a blossom, and that which came to me as a blossom goes on as fruit.” – Dawna Markova*

1. What does Markova mean when she says she “will not die an unlived life”? What does it mean to “live life”?
2. How would you describe the message of this quote?
3. In re-reading this quote, do you see any relevance to your life? If yes, how? If no, why not?
4. How would you describe her seed-blossom-fruit metaphor to someone? What is she trying to relate in using that imagery?
5. How can following your vision lead to personal peace? Who encourages you to follow your vision?

*“Crisis is the time for truth.” – Chellis Glendenning*

1. What does crisis have to do with truth? What is a crisis?
2. In thinking about the last time you were presented with a crisis, how did you handle it? How would you describe the experience for someone else?
3. Why do crises happen? What brings them on, and what alleviates them? Who gets involved in handling a crisis?
4. What life lessons have you learned from seeing or being in a crisis?

*“If you have ever been called defiant, incorrigible, forward, cunning, insurgent, unruly, rebellious, you're on the right track.” – Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

1. What do each of these adjectives mean? Are they positive or negative? How does the author intend them? Who do people usually describe with these words?

2. How would you feel if you were called any of these adjectives? How do you think the author would feel? Why?
3. Why would you be “on the right track” if you’re being called these words? Where is that “track” leading you?

*“Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” – Helen Keller*

1. Why is avoiding danger no safer than exposing yourself to it outright? Can anyone avoid danger? What is danger?
2. What is safety? How do you keep yourself safe?
3. Are life’s lessons learned along a safe road or by taking a more dangerous road? What kinds of danger, other than physical or situational, do you find in your life?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

feminism, truth, narrative, voice, discrimination, history, herstory, shero, patriarchy, matriarchy, equality, competition, cooperation, stereotype, generalization, rape, balance, enculturation

## **SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE**

An American Shero of 1941, by Colman McCarthy

Feminism, Peace and Power, by Mary Roodkowsky

Men, Women and the Art of Friendship, by Colman McCarthy

Patriarchy: A State of War, by Barbara Hope

Rape is All Too Thinkable for Quite the Normal Sort of Man, by Neal King and Martha McCaughey

## **FOR THE CLASSROOM**

### **Enculturation of Women’s and Men’s Roles**

Objective: To explore how men and women’s roles are taught and reinforced starting from childhood.

Time: One class period

Procedure: The following questions and suggestions can stimulate good discussion about men’s and women’s roles in society. They can be explored in a variety of ways: by writing the questions on the chalkboard or white board, by typing them and distributing them to students for independent thinking or group discussion, or by posing them as writing prompt questions.

Processing:

- How are little girls taught to play? What activities do they do together? How are little boys taught to play? What activities do they do together? What word summarizes how little girls play, and what word summarizes how little boys play?
- What color is associated with girl babies? What color is associated with boy babies? What are some common nicknames for girls? What are some common nicknames for boys? What accounts for the differences in how girls and boys are raised?
- What are the exceptions to these generalizations? Where did these stereotypes originate and what reinforces them? What are you doing to reinforce or break these stereotypes? Are they helpful or harmful? Truthful or false?

### **Self-Protection**

Objective: To demonstrate the differences between how women and men incorporate self-protection in their everyday lives.

Time: Twenty minutes; ten to brainstorm, ten to process

Procedure: Ask students to individually and silently make a list of all of the things they have done in the past week to protect themselves. Allow the full ten minutes for brainstorming. Make two lists on the board, one for men and one for women, and compile a list based on the students' responses.

Processing:

- Whose list is longer, the men's or the women's? Why?
- What are the men's reactions to the items on the women's list? What are the women's reactions to the men's list?
- If there is a disparity, what could account for this?
- Are men and women enculturated to behave differently? Should there be a difference?

### **RESOURCES**

- Ms. Magazine, [www.msmagazine.com](http://www.msmagazine.com)
- Mother Jones, [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)
- In Lak Ech Xicana Poetry, [www.inlakech.net](http://www.inlakech.net)
- Dolores Huerta biography, [www.ufw.org/dh.htm](http://www.ufw.org/dh.htm)
- National Organization for Women, [www.now.org](http://www.now.org)
- The UN Internet Gateway on the Advancement and Empowerment of Women, [www.un.org/womenwatch/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/)
- Girl Scouts of the USA, [www.gsusa.org](http://www.gsusa.org)
- Girls For a Change, [www.girlsforachange.org](http://www.girlsforachange.org)
- California Association of Student Councils, [www.casc.net](http://www.casc.net)

- Third Wave Foundation, [www.thirdwavefoundation.org](http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org)
- Center for Research on Women and Social Justice, [www.womst.ucsb.edu/projects/crwsj/](http://www.womst.ucsb.edu/projects/crwsj/)
- National Women's History Project, [www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org)
- Circle of Life Foundation, [www.circleoflifefoundation.org](http://www.circleoflifefoundation.org)



## Chapter 7: Education Under Scrutiny

### THE POWER OF YOUTH

Young people are often lulled into believing that they have no power until they can vote. This is flat out wrong. Many young people have been responsible for radical change outside the confines of voting, using their youth and creativity as leverage points in their campaigns. Young people brought down Slobodan Milosevic in a nonviolent campaign, just like young people helped to reverse the racist system of apartheid in South Africa and of the Jim Crow laws in the United States.

Young people have energy, determination and fearlessness that adults often unlearn or forget how to harness. Because young people have such tremendous buying power, the boycotts that have been instituted in many countries have been widely successful due to the cooperation and organization of young people.

A group of high school students who learned about the abuses that Nike perpetrates, like child and sweatshop labor, decided to send back their Nike items to the headquarters in Oregon. In a giant box, they collected Nike apparel at their school, invited their local media and told the president of Nike that they would not purchase any more products until Nike improved their labor standards. Taking action in that manner sends a louder message than voting ever could – in many ways, those who decide and enforce status quo power bases are not elected officials. They are heads of multinational corporations or employees of the system.

An informed democracy is a strong democracy. We must cultivate an informed voting population from the cradle, letting our actions speak louder than our words. We have to ensure universal health coverage for the 33 million Americans with none. We have to provide for the one-fourth of children who live in poverty in our country. Our politicians are only as strong as the people they represent. They work for us, not we for them. We must persuade them to see that the working poor deserve better. The success of our country that rests on their backs, on the labor they provide. They should have the opportunity to elect people who will represent their best interests.

*The following personal profile is a reflection on unschooling by Kim Podzimek, the Kathy Kelly Peacemaker Intern at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Kim worked on issues of peace education, nuclear disarmament, nonviolence trainings, and the sanctions on Iraq during her internship.*

### UNSCHOOLED LESSONS, by Kim Podzimek

*"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."*

-Steve Biko, founder and martyr of the Black Conscious movement in South Africa during the anti-apartheid movement

As a high school student I was quite eager to leave the prison-like institution that many people like to call *school*. I was like any average student in high school. I enjoyed lunch and the

10-minute "nutrition" break where everyone would race to the cafeteria to load up on caffeinated beverages and sugar-filled snacks and then attempt to sit still in the classroom for two hours until the next break or the end of school.

My high school was typical - there was the popular group, the skaters, the stoners, the intellectuals and the punks. It was segregated as such, no one every really talked or hung out outside of their "high school assigned crowd". I was naïve. I had no idea what was going on in the rest of the world and didn't really care. They were not the best years of my life, but high school did have its moments.

Junior year, I met a guy who introduced me to the idea *unschooling*. He was an unschooler himself who had just spent three years in London because his father was a civilian lawyer for the U.S. navy. He was asked to leave the prep school he attended because of "unsatisfactory work." He hadn't been in school for two years. He visited my school; I say visited because he really didn't go to class much and he could care less when a teacher would call him out of class and ask why he failed the test. When in class he answered all the questions, for about three months. Then he just stopped going.

One day I asked why he never went to school? I told him that if he ever wanted to get a job and be successful then he would have to get a diploma and go to college, just like my whole family had told me. He gave me a funny look, handed me a book and said there are other ways.

The book was, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to quit school and get a real life and education* by Grace Llewellyn (TLH). The Bloomsbury Review says that it is a "dangerous book" and it is. It tells the truth. It amazed me and changed me, I think for the better. It answered questions that seemed to roll around in my head daily: Why can't I concentrate? I knew the answers, so why did I do so poorly on the tests? Why don't I have any ambition? Questions I can now see rolling through many students' head as they study at the library or are walking home alone from school.

It also made me begin to question everything that I had been taught: Go to school until you're 18, go to college for four years, get a job and *then* start YOUR life. Well Miss Llewellyn turned my world right side up and in the process I put my parents through hell, trying to convince them that their 17 year-old B-average, college-bound daughter was going to "drop-up" out of school and take control of her life, just six months before graduation. It was anything but easy.

It didn't go over well at all. I cried, they cried, I put up my protest, they blamed it on my friend and we didn't speak for a while. I did graduate, against my will.

My first experience *unschooling* was with my friend, while still going to high school. I took a 14-day trip on the Green Tortoise down the Baja peninsula. I was a sixteen-year-old who had never been outside the U.S., let alone gone on a trip with friends by myself. My parents had many reservations, especially since I was going with a guy whom they seemed to blame all my teenage rebellion on. In the end they let me go and said that they trusted me.

The next fourteen days, I saw a world I had previously only seen in photos. I saw children running around the streets barefoot, I saw families living in shacks built out of garage doors, plastic boards, cardboard, I saw poverty and it opened my eyes to the fact the everyone doesn't live in tract housing with cars and bicycles for every child. I spent New Year day with a local family. Our group of thirty-two sat on the dirt floor or danced to the live band, which consisted of local family members and friends. We played hide and seek with the kids and then we all piled into a pickup truck and rode back to camp.

On the trip we ate homemade tortillas, swam with sea lions and snorkeled (where I saw a small octopus). I played volleyball with some children of a family who made all thirty-two of us dinner of goat, rice, beans and tortillas, all homemade items. I was able to experience the wonderment of hot springs and learned *un poquito de espanol*. The Green Tortoise opened my eyes to a different way of life where life didn't begin when college ended and work began, life started the day when you were born and it was a struggle to survive everyday.

My second unschooling experience came after high school was finished. I tried to just go straight to college, as my family wanted, but that is not what I wanted, so I only took two classes: guitar and eastern religion. Between working and school, I unschooled myself to France. Ever since I was little I had wanted to go to France and not just go and stay a few days and leave. I wanted to live there. I was too impatient to wait for my junior year of college to study abroad and had missed the opportunity in high school, so I needed to find another way. Unschooling provided that way.

Chapter 29 in the Teenage Liberation Handbook is entitled "worldschooling" and it gives ideas of ways to live in other countries and experiences the culture outside of the "traditional" setting. In October 1999, I found my family through the very small homeschooling organization in France. In January 2000 I bought my plane ticket, In March 2000 I received my visa and in April 2000 I boarded a plane to Paris. For nine months I grew (both psychologically and physically due to the wonderful food), read, relaxed, learned French, and gained confidence.

My unschooling experience in France cannot be condensed into words. All I know is the courage I gained from going through all the problems of the language barrier and trying to get to the south of France from Paris by myself, setting up a trip for my aunts to tour Europe with me (My family still felt that chaperones were needed for me to trek about Europe), has made me a stronger, happier person. I have taken control of my life, I know a lot more about what is going on around me and I have a greater idea of why I am in college and typing this paper.

Unschooling is not the absence of conventional education, but the knowledge that I can control my own education. I unschooled my way through my last two years of high school. Miss Llewellyn touches on the fact that parents usually will not be very enthusiastic about the fact that a child wants to take control of his/her education, as mine. My last two years of high school I did the minimum to get by, but found if I filled my own curiosity about the world around me at my own pace and read what I wanted too, I could pass the exams that focused on mind numbing textbooks and rote learning techniques.

It was hard, though, because to an extent I still was in the mind set that I needed to study the books and listen to the teacher. I was in the "unschooling" process, teaching my mind to think for its self. I now feel confident and enjoy, even the most mundane classes. I truly feel it was because I "unschooled" my brain and "relearned" how to learn.

Unschooling anything takes courage because it is an alternative to the norm. Unschooling takes guts. I encountered so many people who said, "You are not going to get anywhere doing this unschooling thing." When I was in France my grandmother would ask me when I was coming home and starting a real education. Little does she seem to know, or want to know for that matter that I learned more in France from my family, myself, and my surroundings than any other time I can remember. I truly feel that if more students were able to contribute more to their education the world would be much a happier place.

School brought me down; told me I wasn't good enough for Yale, Princeton, and even the popular crowd. Unschooling taught that Yale, Princeton, Harvard, the popular crowd wouldn't make me happy and if they were going to make me happy I would have succeeded in going to



those schools and being part of that crowd. School told me that I wasn't good enough because my grades weren't perfect and my attendance was far from perfect. School told me that if I didn't take the SAT, colleges wouldn't accept me. School seems to focus on the material items: grades, attendance, SAT, ACT, testing, and other standardized testing rather than what really matters to the students, learning.

Unschooling takes that academic violence of grades, tests, attendance, and throws it out the window. Unschooling let me grade myself, take my own tests, make my own attendance. It is amazing because I seem to be harder on myself when I am unschooling, than when I am in school. This is because I know the way the teacher grades, I know that if I only read a certain section of the text I can get an "A" on the exam. With unschooling I have to read the whole text or do more research if I am to pass my own "self-evaluation."

Unschooling lets students take control of their own minds, lets them think for themselves and teaches them how to survive in a world plagued with war, violence, death, and sadness. It shows them how to deal with these issues rather than just attempts to teach them the logistics. It lets each individual look within himself or herself and the outside world rather than having some "adult" tell them how to feel, when to go to the bathroom, when to think, speak, cry, laugh and be human. Unschooling teaches students' to learn for themselves, rather than have information shoved into their brains, much like the rote style of *memorize, memorize, memorize*, until the test and then forget it all immediately. Unschooling gives the student a chance to be both student and teacher and teaches how to understand their own learning abilities. Unschooling doesn't put students in categories like slow learners, dumb, ADD, and smart. Every child is smart because he/she is working at their own pace and doesn't have the competition of grades or "high school status".

Unschooling has made me realize that I can be successful at anything I put my mind to. I am a better, happier college student and human person because I understand my mind and understand my desires and I owe none of it to the conventional school experience, but rather my experiences outside of conventional school.

### **Questions about Unschooling Lessons:**

1. Based on Kim's experiences, what is your impression of alternative schooling?
2. Is this a healthy option for standard schooling?
3. What kind of person would benefit from this kind of experience or approach to learning?
4. If you could ask Kim a question, what would it be?

### ***QUOTES TO CONSIDER***

*"The danger of education, I have found, is that it so easily confuses means with ends. Worse than that, it quite easily forgets both and devotes itself merely to the mass production of uneducated graduates – people literally unfit for anything except to take part in an elaborate and completely artificial charade which they and their contemporaries have conspired to call 'life'."*  
–Thomas Merton

1. What are the means of education? What are the ends of education?
2. How can education “forget” both its means and ends? How do you, other students, or anyone involved in the process of education lose sight of both the means and the ends of education?
3. Is there any truth in Merton’s assertion that education is devoted to the mass production of uneducated graduates? What does he mean by “uneducated”? Is it possible to go to school and not get an education? How could this happen?
4. What “charade” is Merton talking about?
5. Who might disagree with this quote? Why? Who might agree with it? Why?

*“One should seek out an audience that matters. In teaching, it is the students. They should not be seen merely as an audience but as a part of a community of common concern in which one hopes to participate constructively. We should be speaking not ‘to’ but ‘with’. That is second nature to any good teacher, and it should be to any writer and intellectual as well. A good teacher knows that the best way to help students learn is to allow them to find the truth by themselves.” – Noam Chomsky*

1. As a student, have you ever felt like a member of an audience? What is this like? How do members of audiences behave? How do students behave?
2. What is the difference between speaking “to” someone and speaking “with” someone? What are the differences in power structure when someone talks “to” you and when someone talks “with” you?
3. How have your teachers helped you find the truth yourself? Why would Chomsky say that is the best way to learn?
4. Where is “the truth” learned? What resources in school help you to learn “the truth”? Is “the truth” as it is taught in school the same as “the truth” as learned in life? How are they the same? How are they different?

*“When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school, it’s a wonder I can think at all.” - Paul Simon*

1. How can high school hinder thinking? Is Simon right – is it crap?
2. What is useful about school? What isn’t useful?
3. How do you see yourself using what you have learned in high school throughout the rest of your life? What do you think you need to know that can’t get taught in school?

*“A student is a searcher after truth.” - Gandhi*

1. Under Gandhi’s definition, who can be a student? Is someone a student simply because they attend school, or vice versa, can someone be a “student of life” without attending school?
2. Do you consider yourself a student? What does learning mean to you? What have you learned recently?
3. Is there one “truth” that students are searching for, or are there many? Where is truth found? How do you know when you’ve found it?

*"Schools grade and, therefore, they degrade." -Ivan Illich*

1. What does it mean to degrade someone?
2. How does Illich's play on words to "grade" and "degrade" make light of the very serious situation of giving grades as a measure of knowledge or accomplishment?
3. What do you think grades measure? How do you feel about your grades? How do you feel about grades in general? What has helped to shape your thinking?
4. Have you ever felt you have been graded, or graded others, unfairly? If you could, how would you change the situation to make more fair?

*"I agree with you that we must teach them to resist propaganda. We must begin to inoculate our children against militarism by educating them in the spirit of pacifism." – Albert Einstein*

1. Given that Albert Einstein gained most notoriety for his work on atomic energy which led to the development of nuclear weapons, is this a surprising quote for him to have said? Why or why not?
2. What is propaganda and what is its purpose?
3. How does propaganda differ from reporting the news? How can readers distinguish between news and opinion?
4. Inoculations are like vaccinations, preventative medicine. How can children be protected against militarism? Where does military propaganda come from? What would Einstein include in teaching children in the "spirit of pacifism"?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

unschooling, standardized tests, conformity, authority, learning, education, grades, propaganda, means and ends

## **SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE**

Advice to a Draftee, by Leo Tolstoy

Backstage With Joan Baez, by Colman McCarthy

Education and Success, by Thomas Merton

How to Love Our Children, by Jim and Kathleen McGinnis

Planning for Economic Conversion, by Seymour Melman and Lloyd J. Dumas

Students Astutely Aware, by Colman McCarthy

## **FOR THE CLASSROOM**

### **Ideal Schools Project**

Schools and classrooms are often places where compassion and caring are most urgently needed, and students are asked with shocking infrequency about their suggestions for making education less violent. The Ideal Schools Project gives students the opportunity to work together to design *their* ideal school and present their ideas to the teacher and the rest of the class.

**Preparation:** Ask students to brainstorm for no more than five minutes on a piece of paper what they would include in their “ideal school.” The terminology I sometimes use is, “If you ruled the world, how would schools be?” The idea is that students have the freedom to create an environment where they would like to study and learn. Tell the students that the “ideal schools” project will last at least two class periods, or the equivalent of two hours.

**Materials:** Markers, crayons, large butcher paper

**Directions:** After personal brainstorming, divide students into groups of four or five students per group with one sheet of butcher paper and have them choose some markers and/or crayons. Tell them to share their individual ideas with their group, and from their ideas develop a visual plan on the butcher paper for what their “ideal school” would look like. (Some students draw the school, others write about it, some do a combination of both. All options are acceptable!) Allow forty to fifty minutes for collaboration and drawing.

After students have finished drawing, assign some independent writing and reflection on the “ideal school” they have created, ranging from one paragraph to one page. In the second hour, have each group present their “ideal schools” to the class.

**Questions to consider:**

1. How does your ideal school differ from your current school situation?
2. Does your ideal school currently exist anywhere?
3. What would you be willing to do to make your ideal school a reality?
4. Why does your ideal school not currently exist?
5. Who has power in your ideal school? How does learning take place?
6. Is your ideal school more caring and compassionate than your current school? In what ways?
7. What classes would you offer in your ideal school? How would discipline be handled in your ideal school? How would grades be handled?

## RESOURCES

- California Education and Testing Issues, [www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/education.html](http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/education.html)
- *Doing Democracy*, by Bill Moyer
- *Ending Poverty As We Know It*, by Bill Quigley, [www.endingpoverty.com](http://www.endingpoverty.com)
- Growing Without Schooling, [www.holtgws.com/gws.htm](http://www.holtgws.com/gws.htm)
- Hague Appeal for Peace, [www.haguepeace.org](http://www.haguepeace.org)
- Independent Media, [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)
- *No More Prisons*, by William Upski Wimsatt
- No More Tests, [www.nomorettests.com](http://www.nomorettests.com)
- Paths of Learning, [www.pathsoflearning.net](http://www.pathsoflearning.net)
- People to People Student Ambassador Program, [www.studentambassadors.org](http://www.studentambassadors.org)
- Positive Youth Foundation, [www.positive-youthfoundation.com](http://www.positive-youthfoundation.com)
- Power to the Youth, [www.youthpower.net](http://www.youthpower.net)
- Rethinking Schools Network, [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

- *Take Action: A Guide to Active Citizenship*, by Mark and Craig Kielburger
- Teen World News, [www.teenworldnews.com](http://www.teenworldnews.com)
- *The Kid's Guide to Social Action*, by [Barbara A. Lewis](#), [Pamela Espeland](#), [Caryn Pernu](#)
- *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, by Grace Llewellyn
- What Kids Can Do, [www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org)
- Wire Tap, [www.wiretapmag.org](http://www.wiretapmag.org)
- Youth Radio, [www.youthradio.org](http://www.youthradio.org)

## Chapter 8: A New, Clear Solution

### Humans and the Environment

In discussing the depths of peacemaking and journeying to places where our core beliefs are challenged, where we see and learn things that might break our hearts, where we begin to reevaluate our priorities or conversely stand evermore steadfast in them, the destination of peace is always elusive.

Perhaps warmaking is easier because it has a clear start and a clear end. Peacemaking is subtle and requires constant refinement. Thich Nhat Hanh writes about “What’s Not Wrong” in his book *Peace Is Every Step*, saying that we do not recognize our non-toothache until we have a toothache. This is a bit like peacemaking, sometimes.

Yet in contrast, the war on the environment, on the poor and especially on women and children worldwide gives us special incentive to solve these problems as the population of the world grows and the resources to nurture all of us diminish. In our haste toward progress, we dump toxic waste in primarily poor communities, polluting playgrounds and contaminating water sources. Cheaper genetically modified foods are flooding the supermarkets without knowing the impact on humans. Obesity is becoming a health risk to both children and adults in the United States, partially because our culture relies on fast food which is often less than nutritious.

Environmental justice means cleaning up our messes and making sure that our natural resources are safe for the seventh future generation. Sustainability means addressing our present needs while being mindful of the future needs of the planet and not robbing our children’s children of clean air, clean water and clean land.

Remnants of wars have contaminated our landscape, killing wildlife and poisoning children and adults. Depleted uranium from ammunition and nuclear testing present problems of unforeseeable proportions because of their lasting impact. Humans’ inability to get along with each other is creating radioactive catastrophes all over the world. We can no longer ignore these realities.

In recent years, groups of concerned people, as well as individuals, have taken positive actions for peace that have impacted the whole world. People in Iowa have cared about people in Iraq; people in Colorado have cared about people in Colombia; people in Rhode Island have cared about people in Rwanda. In our ever-increasing interconnected world, more people are realizing the principle that “I am you and you are me.” As Thich Nhat Hanh would say, “We are not two.” We are one.

Human beings are not distinct from the environment, but rather one part of the cycle.

Acting in a common voice toward the goal of freedom and justice for all people and animals means amending our wasteful ways, conserving water and recycling, killing fewer animals for food and looking after our needs rather than our greeds.

Global healing takes global participation. The new, clear solution is just around the corner.

### QUOTES TO CONSIDER

*“Teach me to walk soft on the earth as a relative to all that live. Sweeten my heart and fill me with light. Give me the strength to understand and the eyes to see.” – Black Elk, Oglala Sioux*

1. What does it mean to “walk soft on the earth”? What are different ways that people walk softly? What would it mean to do the opposite?
2. How would our world change if we made decisions like the Native Americans did, with the seventh generation in the future in mind? What timeframe do we use to make decisions presently?
3. How do you need your heart sweetened? What situations would that impact? What would your eyes like to see and understand? What would you do with this knowledge?

*“Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love”. – Rumi*

1. How can you let yourself be pulled by what you really love? How do you acknowledge your intuition and ‘gut’ feelings?
2. What ways do you resist the ‘pull’ of your passion in life? Where does this resistance get you?
3. In what ways is it difficult to follow your passion? What creates the obstacles? What can you do to turn the obstacles into opportunities?

*“There are now more than 50,000 nuclear weapons, more than 13,000 megatons of yield deployed in the arsenals of the United States and the (former) Soviet Union, enough to obliterate a million Hiroshimas. But there are fewer than 3,000 cities on the earth with populations of 100,000 or more. You cannot find anything like a million Hiroshimas to obliterate.”*

*– Carl Sagan*

1. In the time since Carl Sagan said this quote, the number of nuclear weapons produced has increased
2. What are the present dangers of nuclear weapons? How many countries have nuclear weapons? How many have used them? Who funds the tests for nuclear weapons?
3. What became of the people from Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Who bears the responsibility for what happens to the people and the environment after nuclear weapons are used?
4. Why do people trust the power of nuclear weapons? What roles do fear and intimidation play? What role does diplomacy play?
5. What countries are presently at odds over nuclear policies? If you had the opportunity, how would you recommend their solving the dispute?

*“Be joyful, even though you have considered all the facts.” – Wendell Berry*

1. What are “all the facts”? What does Berry mean by this quote?
2. Is it possible to have hope in a world where so much evil and poverty and squalor are present? Where is joy found? How do you create joy in your life?
3. Can a society be realistic about its problems and still be positive? Think about some examples from your experience.

*“The release of atomic energy has not created a new problem. It has merely made more urgent the necessity of solving an existing one.” – Albert Einstein*

1. What is the existing problem to which Einstein refers?
2. Is atomic energy itself a negative or evil thing? What makes atomic energy dangerous?
3. What is the timeframe for solving the problems which atomic energy has made more urgent?

*“One must care about a world one will never see”. – Bertand Russell*

1. Why should we care about a world we will never see? Who will see it?
2. What qualities must a person or society have in order to care about something so far in the future?
3. If you could predict what the world will be like in fifty, seventy-five and one hundred years, what would you see?

*“In the time it takes you to have your lunch, the number of animals killed is equal to the entire population of San Francisco. In our ‘civilized’ society, the slaughter of innocent animals is not only an accepted practice, it is an established ritual.” – John Robbins*

1. Do you think that a culture which raises animals on factory farms is more violent? Are people who kill animals more inclined to kill other people? Is there a connection?
2. What does it mean to be desensitized? What cultural resources make people more desensitized to violence toward animals?
3. If people had to kill their own chickens, pigs and cows, do you think as many people would eat animals? Does the convenience of the grocery store allow us to be distanced from our food sources? What impact do you think this has on young children?

*“You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war.” – Albert Einstein*

1. What is Albert Einstein famous for?
2. Why is it not possible for people to simultaneously prevent and prepare for war? What efforts are involved in preparing for war? What are the necessary ingredients for war preparation?
3. What do people do to prepare for peace? What are the necessary conditions for peace to exist?
4. How do you think Einstein would respond to someone who believes that wars are fought to bring about peace? Can you name some examples of this kind of rationale?
5. What are some of the inevitable outcomes of wars? Are these outcomes consistent with the ideals of peace?

## **CONCEPTS TO DEFINE**

slippery slope, vegetarian, vegan, myths and truths, atomic, dichotomy, interconnected



## SELECTIONS FROM SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE

Diet for a New America by John Robbins, Diet for a Small Planet by John Robbins, A Vegetarian Sourcebook by Keith Akers

### FOR THE CLASSROOM

#### THE INTERSECTION OF ANIMAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Lesson Plan:** The Intersection of Animal Rights and Human Rights

**Objective:** Students can explore the overlap between animal rights and human rights and learn how we express our values toward both animals and humans. One of the most interesting clues for examining our values as a society can be learned by examining how we treat animals. The last chapter in ‘Solutions to Violence’ deals with animal rights, vegetarian options and examining the sources of our food, how the workers are treated and what animals endure for our fashion and cuisine.

**Preparation:** We watch People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) videos in class; we see what happens to animals before they reach our belts, shoes, jackets and dinner plates.

**Discussion Questions:** What are the reasons why people do not want to adopt animals from the pound?

I find it continually disturbing that we are becoming more and more far-removed from our food and clothing sources, that animals are seen as “beneath” us and that their life experience is less valuable? How can we justify causing pain, injury and death to sentient beings in the name of fast food and pop culture? What allows us to objectify animals, and what does it say about us as a society? The following are a list of some reasons students give:

- **The animal is too old.** People want to adopt cute, young, playful animals. We want to be our puppy’s first family, to be the ones to train little Fido. We do not want an old dog who might die any day. We don’t want to deal with incontinence and arthritis because ailing animals are hard to take care of. An older animal already has established patterns and behaviors - as the saying goes, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”
- **The animal is too violent.** Perhaps the animal was abused by a previous owner. Perhaps the animal will lash out at strangers, the mail delivery person, the neighbors or worse yet - the family. People getting a new pet don’t want to worry about pet misbehavior, potential lawsuits and hospital bills.
- **The animal is sickly or injured.** Animals with less-than-perfect health are less likely to be adopted. Someone getting an animal from the pound does not want to incur costs for an already-ailing animal. Animals who have been hit by cars, missing limbs, or with dangerous or contagious diseases are less adoptable. People usually get animals to liven

up the atmosphere; they do not want an energy drain. We want happy, peppy puppies, not cumbersome dying animals. They are a liability.

- **The animal is untrained, not housebroken.** Who wants to clean up after an animal? Who wants to incur the cost of furniture repair and carpet cleaning right off the bat?
- **The animal is secondhand.** Animals from the pound are “used.” They’re not “brand new.” In our culture, we are taught that hand-me-downs are trashy and classless. You can only be assured of good quality if you buy something brand new. There is status in buying a firsthand pet, being the first owner, raising it and training it yourself.
- **The animal is not a pure breed.** Most pound animals are mutts, not pedigreed champions. In our culture, upbringing and being from a traceable lineage is quite meaningful. We don’t want animals from the “wrong side of the tracks.” You have status if your family history is recorded, not if you are the bastard puppy of some random mongrels. Paternalism and patrilineal descent dictate if you are quality, if you have elegance and character.
- **The animal is not good with kids.** People do not want their pets to be a liability. They want their pets to be on best behavior all the time, and certainly don’t want them to injure, bite, intimidate or maim any human being, especially a child.
- **The animal is ugly.** We want beauty to surround us. Our pets are a reflection on us. Unsightly, homely animals cast a negative shadow on the caretakers. We don’t want an ugly pet sitting on our lap or front porch. We want our guests to dote on our little darlings!

**Processing:** This laundry list of reasons why pets from the pound are more difficult to adopt provide insight into American values. The Solutions to Violence class has come up with the following list of generalizations we can make about society and our attitudes toward our fellow human beings based on how we view animals from the pound.

1. We value beauty and youth. We revere young-looking, fresh-faced people. We constantly try to relive our youth via plastic surgery, fad diets, youthful clothes, make-up - or through our own children. We spend more time trying to look beautiful rather than be beautiful from the inside out.
2. We want to keep violence locked up, quarantined, out of sight, out of mind. Many violent animals are euthanized; many violent humans, including kids, are euthanized via capital punishment. We cage animals and we cage humans, especially those that do not represent the best elements of society, those we’re not proud of. We drug violent and dangerous animals, and we over-medicate violent and dangerous ‘criminals’ to numb and neutralize them. We can objectify both animals and people when they “cross the line” by hurting or killing another living being. They both become less than human.
3. We value high society, fame, pedigree and name brands. Families whose trees read like the “Who’s Who” of Ivy Leagues, CEO’s and Junior League presidents are more well-regarded than the rest of the mundane population. We are attracted to the Jackie O’s and the royal families. We like our Calvin Klein’s, our DKNY and our Prada. Wealth and quality are demonstrated through pure breeding; rich people send their kids to boarding school to learn good grooming and manners.
4. We value purity, virginity and cleanliness. Dumpster diving for food is thought to be dirty, and firsthand food is mostly preferred. Defiled women - those with more than one

sexual partner or with children - are considered secondhand, used. We want perfection, no tarnishes. Reputations must be squeaky clean, especially for our politicians.

5. Sick, injured or differently abled people and animals are often treated with disrespect and indifference. Differently abled people are burdens, too slow, too cumbersome and according to social Darwinism ought not survive if they can't fend for themselves. It is difficult to adopt crack babies or babies with AIDS. We don't want to be near sick people or touch them for fear of contracting some disease. We can't bear to be around depressed people, homeless people or dying people for fear that they might "bring us down" with them. People who can afford to do so pay top dollar for eggs harvested from tall, athletic, intelligent women and equally well-qualified men so that we can create the "perfect child" with no genetic disorders. Babies found to have congenital malformations are often aborted.

**Follow-Up:** In the Abrahamic ideology which dominates Western thinking, we believe in the following hierarchy: God, Man, Woman, Children, and finally Nature - in that order. We have control over all things different or imperfect. Yet, as we explore in *Solutions to Violence*, who sets the standard for perfection? And what does this analysis of unadoptable animals from the pound really mean? What are the implications for our everyday behavior?

## RESOURCES

- A Field Guide to the U.S. Economy, [www.fguide.org](http://www.fguide.org)
- American Friends Service Committee, [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)
- Center for Ecoliteracy, [www.ecoliteracy.org](http://www.ecoliteracy.org)
- Empowering Democracy, [www.empoweringdemocracy.org](http://www.empoweringdemocracy.org)
- *Fast Food Nation*, by Eric Schlosser
- Fellowship of Reconciliation, [www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org)
- International Solidarity Movement, [www.palsolidarity.org](http://www.palsolidarity.org)
- *Meet Your Meat*, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, [www.peta.org](http://www.peta.org)
- *Mindwalk*, a video based on the book *The Turning Point*
- Nonviolence International, [www.nonviolenceinternational.net](http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net)
- Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, [www.wagingpeace.org](http://www.wagingpeace.org)
- Ruckus Society, [www.ruckus.org](http://www.ruckus.org)
- *Skin Trade*, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- *The War Prayer* by Mark Twain
- *The Web of Life*, by Fritjof Capra
- Training for Change, [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org)
- Voices in the Wilderness, [www.vitw.org](http://www.vitw.org), [www.electroniciraq.net](http://www.electroniciraq.net)

## Frequently Asked Questions About Peace Education

### *How do I start teaching peace?*

There is no one right or wrong answer for this question. And because peace education, an inherently interdisciplinary field, takes so many different forms – from formal education in a K-12 setting, to unschooling, to college and university studies, just to name a few – there is not even *one* right answer. It completely depends on your individual situation.

This being said, however, there are certain replicable models for starting peace education in its various forms. Some students have successfully proposed and lobbied for peace education as an independent course in their school, taught by a willing teacher as a semester-long or perhaps even a year-long course. Some schools have conflict resolution, peer mediation or anger management courses or groups – these, too, can count as a part of the peace education picture.

Some teachers and students do not have the spare time to take an individual class on peace education and therefore opt for peace education *infusion*. Infusing themes of peace and justice into traditional subject matter is a good way to making peace relevant in an everyday setting. For example, science classes can learn about deep ecology and conservation techniques, while foreign language classes can learn about current events in countries where their target language is spoken. History classes are a natural fit for peace education infusion since so many of the powerful peacemakers tend to be omitted, or glossed over, in standard history textbooks.

Unschoolers or homeschoolers can visit local peace and justice resource centers, become involved with local living wage or human rights groups, or do internships with organizations focusing on a cause which interests them. Actually, these options are not just for deschoolers, but they are often the ones who have the time to pursue interesting out-of-school opportunities.

To begin a peace education program in a traditional school, seek out natural allies. Do you know a sympathetic teacher or administrator? Is there a particular problem specific to your community which a class on peacemaking could help to address? Gather resources and information, request a meeting with an administrator or teacher. Present what you would like and ask about what the process is for introducing new curriculum. Take a look at the We Say, They Say points before your meeting as these questions often arise.

Be patient. Peace education is a process and does not happen overnight. Every step of introducing a program is actually a part of peace education – *how* you go about introducing the class is just as important as the fact *that* you are working to introduce it. There has to be a balance between process, the *how*, and content, the *what*.

### *What is underwhelming?*

Underwhelming is the opposite of overwhelming.

We all know what it feels like to be overwhelmed – not enough room to intake and understand all of the information. Feeling crowded intellectually and emotionally. Not being able to see the bigger picture and the finer details.

In peace education, underwhelming is important because such big concepts are addressed. Overwhelming someone with information about how to be peaceful can itself be a violent process if the person is weighed down with what s/he wants to understand!

Underwhelming is the idea of taking bite-sized portions of information and being able to think deeply about them, chewing on them until they are digested.

*How do I create an environment where all teachers and learners share power?*

To create an environment where all teachers and learners share power means that each person's contributions carry equal weight in the group. This is sometimes called a "headless" classroom, where students are teachers and teachers are students and no one person has more authority than the other.

In the film *Patch Adams*, the main character says that "every doctor is a patient and every patient is a doctor." All too often, educational systems treat students as if they are empty vessels with no knowledge or valuable contributions. It is often the responsibility of teachers to deal with discipline issues in class, and many do so with a heavy hand. In an environment where there is shared power, everyone is responsible for his or her behavior, and each person is valued for his or her capacity to make age-appropriate decisions. For example, in most schools, students have to raise their hands for permission to use the restroom, a function which in their own homes they probably do not need permission for. A shared-power environment would assume that each person can tend to his or her needs, asking for assistance when necessary, but assuming responsibility independently.

Providing for a balance of power in the classroom can be threatening at times for teachers who rely on fear and coercion to maintain an "orderly" class. But many teachers and students find that their educational environment improves, as does their capacity to truly learn, when they are valued as full participants in the learning process, not just recipients of information.

*What is my theory on grades and testing? What are other theories?*

Shared power also means that teachers and students may have to rethink how grades are given. Leaving the responsibility of giving grades up to teachers means that students are not allowed input, a common occurrence in traditional schools. Some teachers who try to balance power provide for a dialogue with students about their grades, a conversation of sorts. Other teachers try not to give multiple choice tests or exams, or choose not to give tests at all.

Teachers must ask themselves what the grades they give truly measure. Students know the answer to this: many will say that grades determine if you are a good or bad person, if you get into a good college or not, if you are in the good graces of your parents or not. Rarely do students say that their grades are a good measure of what they have learned in class.

Which means that everyone involved in education must examine if schools are doing a good job of helping kids to learn, or just to memorize and regurgitate information, sitting still in their desks feigning interest.

Some teachers let the students grade themselves. Critics of this approach say that students will give themselves automatically higher grades because they can run rampant with their newfound academic freedom. Teachers who use this approach to student-centered grading often report that their students grade themselves lower than the teacher would have. Many teachers feel that students have profoundly internalized the idea that they don't just receive good or bad grades, they *are* their good or bad grades. Allowing some form of teacher-student interaction with respect to grading often helps the student feel like s/he is a part of the process.

*How much of my own opinion do I share with the students?*

In classes on peacemaking and nonviolence, controversial topics often arise. It is natural for the teacher to want to share his or her thoughts with the class, because the teacher is a thinking and feeling human being, engaging in a dialogue with other thinking and feeling human beings. However, in many cases, one good approach to teaching peace is to view the teacher as a neutral facilitator who moderates the discussion between students.

Facilitating is an exceptionally important skill to learn in teaching peace, because students of all opinions and persuasions want to know that they are in an environment safe for them to share their thoughts and beliefs without fear that their teacher will judge, grade or influence them in any particular direction. Simply put, sometimes students just want to be heard.

Deciding whether or not to share your opinion really is a personal choice. Some peace teachers do, some don't. For those who do share their own personal thoughts, many believe that they cannot and should not step outside of their natural role as a human being in class to be an impersonal facilitator. They can create a safe space for students to share and still give honest input in the discussion.

Other teachers feel that under no or rare circumstances should teachers share their personal thoughts and opinions with the class because it might influence the students in one way or another, or that it is inappropriate for someone with a different role in the class who may carry more weight with the students to impose their beliefs on others.

Like most things regarding peace education, there seems to be no one right or wrong answer, only more room for discussion and learning.

*How do I deal with irate parents?*

Sometimes in the course of a classroom discussion, students get upset. Or they get excited. Or they get frustrated. Or they get enlivened by a new idea or thought or perspective for looking at

the world. And when they get home, they share this newfound scenario with their parents, who may or may not agree with their child's conclusion.

It is the case that sometimes in explaining their conclusion, the student only recounts the end product and omits the process by which s/he arrived at this conclusion. Whether purposely or inadvertently, omitting the process or train of thought can alarm parents, whose first reaction is to call, email or visit the teacher with ire and vengeance.

Since peace education is as much about process as it is about content, remember that active listening techniques are helpful, as are clarifying the facts and expressing your genuine care and concern for your students. It is important to have a transparent classroom, and some teachers invite parents into class to observe if there is a problem. However, the area of conflict prevention, as in 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,' works wonders with parents. Many teachers send home syllabi or course descriptions for parents, and stay in contact through parent-teacher conference or via phone calls or email. Reaching out to parents before there is a problem is just as important as knowing how to deal with parents where there is a problem.

#### *Can I use consensus process in class?*

Using a modified form of consensus is a way of bringing students into the decision-making process and creating a shared-power environment in class. In traditional schooling, teachers set the agenda and students follow along. Teachers assign homework, students comply (or not, and suffer the consequences).

Many peace teachers solicit student input on assignments, ask for group participation in making decisions which affect the entire group. Knowing that reaching consensus can be a lengthy process, a 'modified' version can be used. By using a "thumbs up," (agree) "thumbs down," (disagree) or "thumbs sideways" (neutral or opt out) assessment, teachers can get a better reading on class participation or general sentiment about a given decision.

Teaching students about formal consensus process can also help them outside of peace class as well. One standard school phenomenon is to put students into groups for a "group project." Many times this results in one or two people doing all of the work and the others not participating, creating resentment and often arguments. If students are trained in active listening and group process dynamics, there can be a positive impact on group work dynamics.

#### *How can I engage recalcitrant students?*

Peace education emphasizes process as much as content, that is, how class happens is as important as what happens in class. At the beginning of the semester, some peace teachers decide to collectively decide "class guidelines" by brainstorming what values and qualities are important to all learners, and how the class wants to behave throughout the semester. By getting buy-in from all students, including getting the students to sign the "class guidelines" document and publicly posting it as a reminder, teachers can lay the foundation for dealing with any problems that may arise.

Some students take classes on peacemaking because it is consistent with their values and beliefs, and they want to learn more. Other students take classes on peacemaking because it will challenge their values and belief; they, too, want to learn more, but sometimes come from an oppositional standpoint. Other students don't know why they're in a peacemaking class; sometimes the academic counselor assigns them to the class to fulfill a requirement for graduation. Other times their parents want them to take it.

If a student is in class for reasons other than having chosen to take it for him or herself, it can be difficult to get that student to engage or participate. Sometimes students are sullen or resentful. Sometimes they are rude.

Try to remember that students perceive themselves as being discounted or taken advantage of, feeling like they are not in control of their own lives. Part of learning about peacemaking is recognizing power structures and identifying oppression, and looking at how people throughout history have worked to change unfairness and exploitation. Peacemaking is also meeting people where they're at. Some teachers give a questionnaire during the first class to prompt students to evaluate themselves. Some questions include: Why are you taking this class? What do you hope to get out of it? What qualities/attributes/talents do you bring to this class? What do you think may be difficult for you? What would you like to improve this semester? What do you expect from me (the teacher)?

When classroom problems happen, teachers and students can fall back on the "guidelines" that the students themselves helped to write. This helps everyone accept personal responsibility for contributing to the problem, and it often shifts the attention from a you versus me dynamic to one which lends itself to resolution by examining what parts of the process and "guidelines" are not being upheld.

#### *What is the learning curve like in peace education classes?*

The learning curve in classes on peacemaking, especially in high schools, is interesting because it follows somewhat of a predictable pattern. People wanting to teach peace should expect to encounter some rough times; they are a part of the learning curve. As students begin to examine their beliefs and compare them to the beliefs their family and friends share, they may find that they have different opinions than the people whom they care about, and this can cause conflict both in the class and at home.

It is important to teach about active listening skills and conflict management techniques early in the semester so that as students try out their new ideas and challenge what may be controversial topics with their family and friends, or other teachers, they have processes to fall back on when (not if) conflict ensues. Discussing how people behave in conflicts is a good idea, because people have different comfort levels with various intensities in conflict. Some are accustomed to yelling, others become silent; some address problems as they arise, others wait until the problems have been building up and spew like volcanoes.



Some teachers find that the class goes along smoothly for the first few weeks while students are settling in. When they begin to relax in class as they let down their guard and the topics prompt deeper discussion, problems often happen. This is a part of teaching peace.

## Conclusion

*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.*

– Henry David Thoreau

*With mindfulness, each moment of your life is a jewel.*

– Thich Nhat Hanh

To reach peace, teach peace.

Reaching peace is a lifelong endeavor, an incomplete and ongoing process that requires participation at the individual, community and international level. Peace is not an endpoint, not a singular achievable goal but rather a continuum, a practice and a way of living that continually gets refined and redefined.

If you have more questions than answers in the peacemaking process, you're headed in the right direction. To find, join or add an existing peace education network or to learn more about teaching peace, visit the website of the National Campaign on Peace Education at [www.PeaceEd.org](http://www.PeaceEd.org).

Peaceed.org is a resource for an active growing network of individuals and groups to share information, build community and connections, and support local, regional and national efforts to address the roots of violence by educating for a culture of peace.

Quite a bit of information exists on peace education in the U.S., but unfortunately it has been scattered – a simple Google search for 'peace education' gives ample evidence to this. The goal is that this website is to fulfill the needs of people and organizations who are looking for information or resources on peace education in the United States.

In January 2003, a group of peace educators gathered in Chicago for a three-day brainstorm to discuss the various versions of peace education and work toward a common vision for the future of teaching peace. Those at the gathering came from a variety of educational experiential backgrounds and from different regions throughout the United States. Their common ground was that everyone had a commitment to some form of peace education, whether formally or informally: teaching peace through music, arts and drama; teaching peace as a semester-long course; teaching peace through workshops on the weekends and during summers; teaching peace through religious curriculum; teaching peace to children, youth and adults; teaching peace in urban, suburban and rural settings; and teaching peace internationally.

By the conclusion of the gathering, the group had identified a specific need for bringing together the resources, organizations and information on peace education in the United States in one 'hub' to create an organized place for people looking for information about peace education in its many forms. From this need, PeaceEd.org and the National Campaign on Peace Education (NCPE) were born.

PeaceEd.org/NCPE is affiliated with Nonviolence International and is endorsed by several organizations which hold peace education to be a core component of their missions and objectives.

PeaceEd.org is divided into seven sections: Why the Need for PeaceEd.org, What is Peace Education in the United States, Who Provides Peace Education, Where is Peace Education in the U.S., When are Peace Education Events Taking Place, and How Can I Get Involved. There is also section for Links to other Peace Education-related themes.

### **Goals of PeaceEd.org**

PeaceEd.org:

- is a nationwide web of information-sharing which aims to support local, regional and national efforts to teach peace.
- advocates constructive conflict prevention through reason, justice and respect.
- promotes active nonviolence as a lifestyle to address a variety of problems.
- serves as a hub for information on workshops, curricula, speakers, and peace education resources.
- is endorsed by notable organizations devoted to promoting peace and justice through education.
- facilitates connections and interaction between individuals and organizations who provide peace education services and those who wish to learn more.
- is useful for teachers and learners of all ages, backgrounds and affiliations.

Every month, PeaceEd.org/NCPE distributes an online newsletter with updates and information on current issues in peace education. Joining the newsletter is just one way of staying connected in the network; hosting a training or workshop, bringing a guest speaker to address your group or initiating a peace education program in your area are other ways of participating. For more information on these ideas, visit the NCPE website at [www.PeaceEd.org](http://www.PeaceEd.org).



### **About the Author**

Leah Wells is a teacher and writer with a Bachelor of Science in Linguistics from Georgetown University. She has taught high school classes in Washington, DC and California, lectured cities all over the United States, and written extensively on the topic of teaching peace. Leah co-coordinates the National Campaign on Peace Education, a project endorsed by several notable organizations like the Hague Appeal for Peace and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, to network teachers and learners working on peace education across the U.S.