



# a MATTER of SPIRIT

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## Unlocking a Nonviolent Future

by Michael N. Nagler, PhD

Derek Oakley and Andres Gutierrez ducked into a hut where they found five women and nine children also hiding. On April 17, 2014, gunmen invaded and started shooting unarmed men, women and children in the Protection of Civilians (POC) compound of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. They eventually killed at least 58 people—most of them internally displaced people (IDPs) of the Nuer ethnic group who had been staying in the POC since the civil war in South Sudan erupted in December 2013. Soon enough the militia burst into their hut, armed with assault weapons, axes and sticks. Somewhat startled to find two non-Sudanese there, they roughly ordered them out. But Derek and Andres were well trained. Glancing at one another, they turned to the gunmen and calmly explained that they were humanitarian workers and would not leave without the others, who were anyhow innocent women and children who had nothing to do with the war. Apparently unmoved at first, the militia ordered them to leave three times, but Derek and Andres did not budge. In the end, the militia left and the women and children were all saved.

communal violence and now seems to some (including the present author) to be a nonviolent answer to war.

As Derek explains, “If we had had weapons we would not be alive today,” and neither would the women and children; “Andres and I survived unharmed through a combination of nonviolent training methods focused on strategy in dealing with violent conflict and ethnic tensions.

UCP represents one of five qualitative changes—growth points—that have emerged in the development of nonviolence worldwide in the years since Gandhi and King. They are:

**1. New Institutions.** Along with more formal institutions such as the International Criminal Court (arguably nonviolent in that it removes impunity from certain very violent crimes) and legal protocols like the “Right to Protect,” civil-society organizations like UCP have come onto the world stage to reduce and forestall conflict by creative, nonviolent means. There are some forty UCP groups operating worldwide, which can be divided into three types: local nonviolent vigilante groups like Chicago’s “Interrupters” or the Orange

Women and children residents of a POC camp in South Sudan

*“If we had had weapons we would not be alive today.”*

Who were these two men, what were they doing in one of the world’s most violent conflicts, and how did they survive their brush with death? Derek and Andres were respectively International Protection Officer and Team Leader for the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) in South Sudan. NP is the largest of some forty non-governmental organizations worldwide that are carrying out what’s called Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping (UCP), institutionalizing an ancient practice that Mahatma Gandhi envisioned as a way to protect communities from



Berets that patrol New York subways; domestic teams like Meta Peace Team that keep the peace at potentially volatile events, often more effectively than and much appreciated by police forces; and international, cross-border peace teams like NP. These new institutions also represent the important shift in the logic of organizations from a top-down, hierarchical model of the typical for-profit corporation to more organic and democratic forms. This has been beautifully brought out by Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom in *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*. Since the essence of nonviolence is rehumanization as Martin Luther King Jr said—“We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented civilization to a person-oriented civilization”—this shift toward a more human-centered vision of organizing is the key structural feature of a possible nonviolent world.

**2. Learning.** The peace movement—or in Kenneth Boulding’s insightful phrase, the worldwide “movement toward peace”—has traditionally been plagued by discontinuity. Every event, every opportunity that crops up in the course of events takes participants unawares, and they must “reinvent the wheel,” with all the weaknesses and errors incident to that kind of opera-

tion—in sharp contrast to the systematic, diligent learning that goes on in the war system. Today, taking advantage of the increases in global communication and travel, activists have been more concerned to share “best practices” with those who find themselves in similar situations. Student leaders from the successful overthrow of President Milošević in Serbia, for example, were on hand at Tahrir Square. They created The Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) to carry on this vital work.

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*...nonviolence as  
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of our destiny.*

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**3. New Science.** What is now called “classical science”—the materialist paradigm of life as random, deterministic and essentially meaningless—is an integral part of the world of violence and destruction from which we are trying to emerge. In the last thirty or so years, an undeniable paradigm shift has happened across all scientific disciplines which should have profound and helpful alternative impacts on the

search for a non-violent future. “Mirror Neurons,” studies on empathy, a new vision of evolution—the story is too rich to be detailed here, but every peace actor should be well versed in it.\* Gandhi, who seized on the work of N.K. Bose on the consciousness of plants to buttress his arguments

for nonviolence, would be making superb use of the “new science” today. Since this “new” science resoundingly supports the inheritance of human wisdom, we now have a powerful consensus about reality, whether we look at the outside or the inside worlds (through science or spiritual discovery) that points to nonviolence as not only possible, but the fulfillment of our destiny.

**4. New Actors.** Gandhi began his work among relatively enfranchised “free” Indians, and a critical boost to his Satyagraha campaign happened when two new groups were drawn in: laborers and women. Similarly today, two traditionally marginalized groups are increasingly empowered, organized and engaged. Women, probably the most important, and indigenous people, who are increasingly threatened by corporate attacks on their lifestyles, have found ways to mount successful nonviolent resistance, especially in North and South America. At least one regular organization, Via Campesina, has helped them gain visibility and effectiveness without sacrificing their traditional lifestyle, and we have seen unprecedented collaborations among people who were all but unaware of one another’s existence, like Native Americans in the territorial United States and Mayan Indians in southern Mexico.

**5. Peace Science.** Along with the great shift in “hard” sciences, scholarly research has begun to acknowledge nonviolence as a field, or at least a phenomenon. There is now an extremely influential study, *Why Civil Resistance Works* by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan (2012), showing that “transitions to democracy” that are free from violence (not the same as nonviolent in principle, which is still quite rare for large movements) are twice as effective as violent ones, in one-third the time.

When Prof. Chenoweth, who at first did not believe in nonviolence, went to look up the research on the relative effectiveness of violent and nonviolent resistance movements, she found...



Meta Peace Team at the Republican National Convention

none. People had been arguing whether nonviolence “works” since time immemorial, but no one thought (dared?) to look at the evidence! Nor is this unusual in the world of nonviolence. Frans de Waal, decades earlier, found that no research had been done on the *resolution* of conflict among primates:

*Fires start, but fires also go out. Obvious as this is, scientists concerned with aggression, a sort of social fire, have totally ignored the means by which the flames of aggression are extinguished. We know a great deal about the causes of hostile behavior in both animals and humans.... Yet we know little of the way conflicts are avoided—or how, when they do occur, relationships are afterward repaired and normalized. As a result, people tend to believe that violence is more integral to human nature than peace.*

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*...wisdom is certainly within us; and nonviolence... is the way to find it.*

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Some seventy years prior to that epiphany, Gandhi had written in his classic *Hind Swaraj* that what we call “history” records the *breakdowns* of the even progress of nature, the evolution towards nonviolence, which “being natural, is not recorded in history.” In other words, the modern world has a myopic vision that sees only the shadow, the negative after-image of reality.

Therefore it is hard to exaggerate the potential significance of these signs of emergence of nonviolence. Nonviolence is, for one thing, the bridge between spiritual development and social change: one who cherishes her or his spirituality and wants to help the world cannot do so through violence, which flatly contradicts spirituality. But the significance of this emergence is even greater: it’s nothing less than an attempt of human nature to reassert itself against the conditioning of the indus-



A candlelight vigil on the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre

trial age. As Huston Smith said some years ago, “For our culture as a whole, nothing major is going to happen until we figure out who we are... we haven’t a clue who we are today.” This is because we have ignored what Gandhi said was nothing less than “the law of our species:” nonviolence. In unearthing our capacity for nonviolence—a process that still has far to go—we are finding ourselves as a species, beginning to realize the meaning of our existence.

This process needs activists who are, as Joanna Macy says, “stopping the worst of the damage;” but it also needs all of us. Nonviolence in practice (aka love in action) is the outward manifestation of the “new story,” but in addition to direct action—and we will need more of it in the coming years—there are other dimensions to the mysterious process of paradigm shift. We facilitate it by acting it out *and* being vocal about why we’re doing it.

At the non-profit where I work, the Metta Center for Nonviolence, we’ve developed a “Roadmap” that the progressive movement can use to realize its full effectiveness in creating this cultural shift. The inner core of Roadmap, called “Person Power,” offers five recommendations anyone is free to take up:

- Avoid violent media (even if that means *all* commercial media today!)

- Learn everything you can about nonviolence (to fill that cultural vacuum)
- Take up a spiritual practice (if you haven’t already done so)
- Interact personally wherever possible (to overcome our isolation, making ourselves invulnerable to oppression, for one thing), and
- Tell the story! Never hesitate to explain that we are body, mind *and spirit*; that security does not come from defeating “enemies” or fulfillment from buying things (and destroying the planet in the process).

We are at the most dangerous crisis of human existence because we have acquired the power to destroy ourselves and are still immature enough to actually do it. Wisdom alone can save us. That wisdom is certainly within us; and nonviolence in thought and action is the way to find it.

\*For more information on the new science, check out AMOS Winter 2014 at [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)

- ▲ **Michael N. Nagler** is professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, where he founded the Peace and Conflict Studies Program. He is also President of the Metta Center for Nonviolence and author of *The Search for a Nonviolent Future* and most recently *The Nonviolence Handbook: a Guide to Practical Action*.



# Trading In Binding Fear for Love in Action

by Ken Butigan

Many years ago I served a six-week jail sentence for engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience as part of a demonstration for peace and justice in Central America. On the day I arrived at the prison in the California desert, I was sent with the other new inmates to what was billed euphemistically as our orientation, but which amounted to a fire-and-brimstone sermon delivered by a sergeant at the top of his lungs. The guard's shrill and descriptive harangue was designed to instill a heavy enough dose of fear to keep us scrupulously in line.

A few days later as I was walking across the prison yard, I heard, "Hey! You!" It was the sergeant who had laid down the law. He ordered me to pick up trash out on the far edge of the property. Without a moment's hesitation, I double-timed it to the area overlooking the desert.

After I had been picking up cigarette butts and gum wrappers for a while, a Jeep Cherokee slowly rumbled up the hill. When it pulled up next to me, the tinted window on the driver's side slowly slid down. It was the sergeant.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he yelled.

"You told me to come out here and pick up garbage." My recently acquired fear of him rapidly deepened. I had

learned from my cellmates that he relished fights breaking out between prisoners because he could then wade in among them and beat them. Anything could happen here, I said to myself, and it would be my word against his.

"No," he replied. "What are you doing *in this prison?*"

I was caught off guard by his question. "I protested the killing of my sisters and brothers in Nicaragua and El Salvador," I said.

His face, already angry, grew even angrier. I thought he was about to go berserk.

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*...the power of violence  
and our potential to  
transform it...*  
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Suddenly, though, the anger melted away. He quickly looked both ways and then said, almost in a whisper, "They sent me to Vietnam. I was ordered to kill a lot of people. Now I don't sleep much at night." He paused for a moment, then he said, "If the government wants my kids for the next war, I'm driving them to Canada."

Then he looked me straight in the eye and said, "What you did probably will make no difference. But I'm glad you did it."

For what seemed like an eternity, the sergeant and I held each other's

gaze. Then he abruptly shifted his eyes and barked, "Get the rest of this trash picked up!" Rolling up the window, he drove off quickly.

For years this experience has served as a personal touchstone for the power of violence and our potential to transform it—and the role fear plays in both. Authority based on instilling fear; authority acquiesced in because of that fear. At the beginning, the typical scenario had played out the way it unwinds in innumerable ways every day around the world. Then the script suddenly had gone awry. The prison guard's history of violence had been kept tightly intact by what we might call an energy field of fear: a military service record that haunted him, a job that depended both on generating fear and fending it off and a fear that his own children might be dragged by his government into war—something that had happened to him and that he deeply regretted. Now, for just a moment, the fear abated long enough for him to come clean, to reveal himself, and to do so not simply to a prisoner, which would have been unusual enough, but to a prisoner serving time for protesting war.

This may have been the first time this sergeant had shared his experience of killing to anyone—how it haunted him, how he wasn't able to sleep and how he even entertained thoughts of resisting plans for a future war. As his fear evaporated long enough to unleash

something of his deeper truth, I found my own fears slowly ebbing away. I was able to see this guard as a human being, and I began to wonder if this was why I had taken nonviolent action in the first place: to meet this wounded stranger, to experience a brief moment of communion and shared solace together, to receive such a revelation from this surprising quarter and to share with him what the thinker Emmanuel Levinas called “the flow of infinity between the eyes.”

All that this required was the miraculous gift of transforming fear—his and mine—into something unexpectedly powerful and liberating.

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Virtually all monumental crises we face today—war, poverty, climate change, racism, sexual assault, hunger—are crushing forms of violence, if by violence we mean *any physical, verbal, emotional, institutional or structural behavior, attitude, policy or condition that disrespects, dominates, dehumanizes, diminishes or destroys ourselves, our fellow beings or our world*. Chronic violence is global, but it also seeps into our lives, relationships, work places, communities and societies.

It is fear that unleashes, justifies and prolongs this violence. Even more, fear is the binding energy that consolidates and deepens violence. This binding energy can trap us as individuals, but it can also grip entire societies and fuel whole cultures of violence, including our own.

But it need not be this way. In our freer moments we realize that we are called in this time to build a world of peace, justice and sustainability—a world free from pervasive personal, interpersonal and structural violence—and that this will require many things, including contagiously transforming the fear that binds us. Here are a few suggestions for doing this:

**Give up our belief in fear and violence.** Our culture of violence is held together by a belief system that says, as the late theologian Walter Wink put

it, “Violence saves.” Wink’s research showed that, for at least 5,000 years, many of us have put our stock in “the myth of redemptive violence,” which turns out to be neither good myth nor good redemption. This story that violence is the answer ignores the underpinnings of that myth: the fear-based life and an unending cycle of violence.

*...regard anyone who crosses your path the way you regard the most beloved person in your life.*

**Try on a belief in goodness, connectedness and nonviolence.** Here is a concrete way to approach this: regard anyone who crosses your path the way you regard the most beloved person in your life. Try this for a year. Or a month. Or maybe a week. Not only will it help us see the infinite worth of every being, it will begin to lessen the chronic fear we have been taught by our culture. It will also serve as a basis of nonviolence by nourishing our interior font of gratitude, compassion and unconditional love.

**Take action.** Join with others to build a movement locally, nationally or internationally to spread the power of nonviolent love in action. This will reveal your fears and how to respond to them. What action should you take? Write down this sentence: “If I were not afraid, I would \_\_\_\_\_,” and then reflect a bit and fill in the blank. It will help you crystallize what you want to do—and encourages you to take steps to it.

Together we can transform the cloying fear that renders us immobile and that keeps our culture of violence humming. Even more importantly, we can together build a culture of peace and nonviolence fearlessly.

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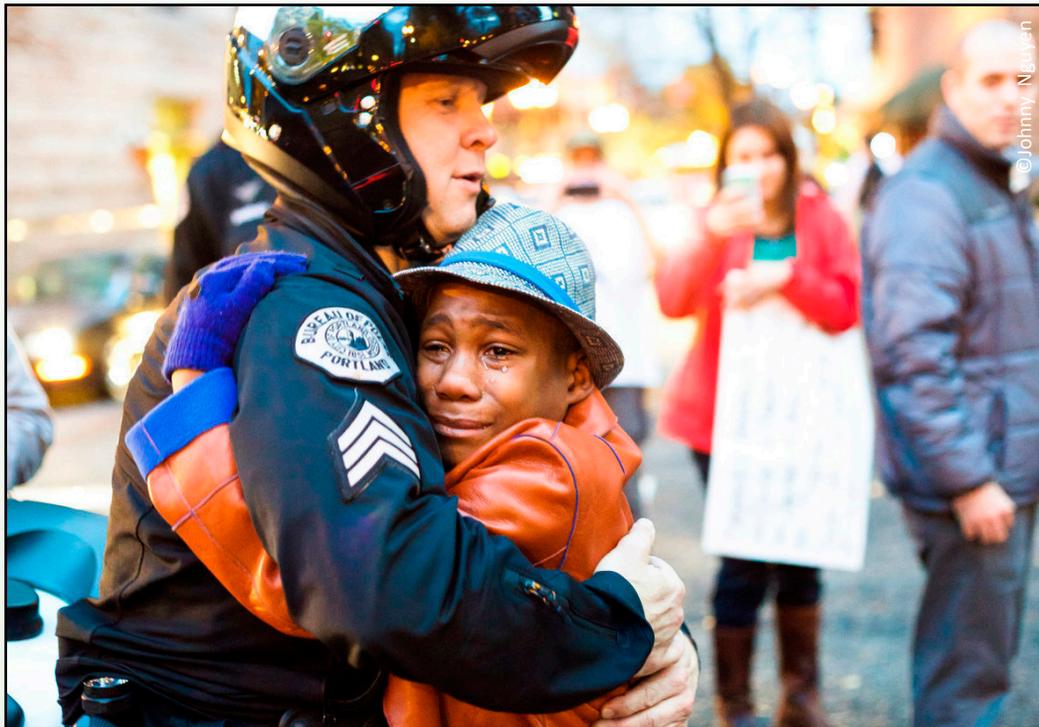
# We Are Beloved

by Nicholas Mele

As I write, the United States is angry, anxious, saddened and split over the shooting of a young, unarmed black man by a white policeman several months ago. At the same time, another, younger black child has just been shot because he was at a playground with a toy gun which closely resembled a real weapon. We live in the midst of a stew of fear and violence. News outlets headline stories about scary epidemics, war, mass executions. Social media memes—cleverly chosen images and sayings propagated over the internet—cater to stereotypes, polarization and fear. Popular culture promotes the myth that violence can solve almost any problem and protect individuals as well as nations from any threat. As theologian Walter Wink wrote in *Engaging the Powers*, “Violence is the ethos of our time. It is the spirituality of the modern world. It has been accorded the status of religion, demanding from its devotees an absolute obedience unto death.” Violence and threat breeds fear, fear of others, fear for our safety, fear that we will not be able to stand against the threats screaming from headlines and television news and talk shows.

To climb out of the morass of violence in which we live requires courage, creativity, effort, persistence, personal integrity and a sense of humor. We must start by honestly examining and healing the violence within ourselves. The first step is cultivating awareness of how we have internalized the violence we experience daily and inflict it on ourselves and others.

The violence we experience is not confined to news headlines or fiery talk show panelists. We also hear threats and violence daily from our families, our friends, our teachers, our supervisors and from our co-workers. The



A police officer hugs a 12-year-old boy during a Ferguson demonstration in Portland, OR

myth that violence solves problems, that a kind of purification or even redemption comes through violent behavior dominates our attitudes and behavior. Over time, we internalize the messages of threat and violence and speak harshly to ourselves. To be sure, often the violent words we hear are not intended to threaten or induce fear, they are simply the consequence

disapproval or withdrawal. As we do so, we also strive to earn approval and love and to exceed what we think others expect of us.

Popular culture reinforces feelings that we are not loved and/or do not measure up. The same media that convey messages of violence and threat convey advertisements and subliminal messages that tell us we are each inad-

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*We see the weakest members of society... as threats to be met with bravado and force rather than as people desperately in need of compassion.*

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of the “ethos of our time” described by Wink. For example, an exasperated parent seeking some support for housecleaning might say to his child, “Pick up your toys!” in a tone of voice that the child hears as an implicit threat to withdraw love or impose punishment. Over time, we impose limits on ourselves in anticipation of others' disappointment,

equate but can compensate by purchasing the right products, or can soothe our anxiety through self-indulgence. We often fall into this trap and substitute material goods for love or identify and value ourselves through our possessions: I drive a luxury car or an SUV or a sexy sports car! I wear brand x clothing! Popular culture also urges us

to avoid relationships in which we feel insecure, including relationships, such as with poor or otherwise marginalized people, that might draw disapproval from “admirable” or powerful people. We see the weakest members of society—the homeless, the mentally ill, the undocumented worker—as threats to be met with bravado and force rather than as people desperately in need of compassion. Since we feel inadequate to deal with our fear, we automatically resort to violence instead of carefully considering responses proportional to the degree and probability of the threats we perceive.

How then, can we defeat the violence which envelops us? How can we live a fully nonviolent, fully human life, passionate and compassionate, stalwartly resisting evil and injustice? The Gospel accounts of Jesus' life give us some guidance. All three synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus' baptism; the story opens the Gospel of Mark. In all three, God declares, “You are my beloved son.” After this, Jesus retreats into the wilderness to fast and pray before beginning his ministry. Throughout his life, Jesus' trust in God's love freed him from shame, fear and other emotional and social pressures. Thus, he was free to love others, in the process breaking through social constraints to heal and build community with outcast, despised people like tax collectors, differently-

abled people and even Roman soldiers. He saw beyond the letter of the Mosaic Law into its spirit and confronted those who could not or would not grasp the Law as deeply. Jesus calls us repeatedly to this same sort of risk-taking and removal of barriers to community.

The practice of contemplative prayer has opened the door to feeling beloved for many. The longer I sit quietly in the cloud of unknowing, the more aware I become of God's love. Whether we focus on our breath, recite a sacred word or use any other technique, when we are still, we are open to God. We can also feel God's love more intensely when we practice gratitude. Simply

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*...we too, are God's beloved children.*  
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recounting to ourselves a few people, situations or things we are thankful for in our lives brings concrete evidence of God's love. Offering thanks to God fosters greater intimacy with God and a deeper knowledge of divine love. We can, moreover, acquire a sense of being loved when we are serving others in some way; when we care for “the least of these,” we honor their belovedness and our own.

As members of the body of Christ, we too are God's beloved children. As described above, we find this difficult to know and feel although we may give

our intellectual assent to the idea that God loves us. Henri Nouwen was much concerned with this subject. He moved from a kind of academic but detached allegiance to the Gospel through stages of engagement with others that culminated in his long participation in the life of a L'Arche community in Canada. These words, from a posthumously published talk by Nouwen, sum up the centrality of feeling God's love:

*We are not what we do. We are not what we have. We are not what others think of us. Coming home is claiming the truth. I am the beloved child of a loving Creator.*

Iconic leaders in nonviolent action also stress the value of feeling beloved. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. defined belovedness as “an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is the love of God working in the lives of [women and] men.”

We can come to embrace God's love through various routes, but several steps are critical to free ourselves of the effects of our culture's ethos of violence. We might start by growing more aware of the violence directed at us by mass media, simply noticing the content of news reports, novels, films and so on and exploring how we feel as we see and hear such things. We should at the same time become more mindful of how the people around us replay what they see and hear and how we and they often respond with either a flight or fight response. We should not neglect a careful look at the violence we do to ourselves. All of this can be painful, and it is hard work, so we need to be gentle with ourselves as well as aware, honest and brave. Acknowledging emotions like fear, anger and pain takes persistence and patience, yet allowing ourselves to experience these emotions helps dissipate them.

A set of questions posed by Fr. John Dear in his recent book, *The Nonviolent Life*, offers a framework for examining

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Selma to Montgomery March, December 1964



the violence we and others do to ourselves from our personal experience and perspective. Start by looking at the violence within.

- What's going on inside you? How do you feel about yourself: your life, your body, your spirit, your soul?
- Do you ever speak critically or harshly to yourself, e.g., "That was stupid!"?
- Do you have any areas or feelings of violence toward yourself?
- Because we live in a culture of violence, we all have moments of self-hatred or violence. Ponder your life journey: What violence did you experience from your parents? Siblings? Relatives? Friends? Classmates? Neighbors?
- How was your childhood and youth influenced by the realities of violence?
- What violence did you experience? What violence did you internalize?
- Finally, consider how we can let the violence lingering within us go and move beyond it to new feelings of peace, inner freedom and joy?

Moving deeper into the understanding of being beloved, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke and wrote of the Beloved Community as the goal of nonviolent action. Joining with others to form a nonviolent community offers companionship and support for the profoundly different way of being and

conducting ourselves that is the way of nonviolence. Many organizations, like Pax Christi, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the denominational peace fellowships, offer resources for small groups or individuals wishing to move deeper into nonviolence. In community, we can explore nonviolence with others' support and together act to reduce and resist the violence in which our society immerses us. We can become prophets speaking the truth of our loving God and Jesus' way of nonviolence to a country addicted to violence.

Since choosing nonviolence is profoundly counter-cultural in the United States today, we need to look for signs of hope while we explore the effects of violence. Throughout my lifelong journey into nonviolence I have been inspired, by an elderly Quaker training a group of college students in 1970; by witnessing unjust authoritarian states in South Africa, South Korea and the Philippines transition peacefully to democracy; and by the growth and success of unarmed interveners in conflict zones around the world. Not every act of nonviolence succeeds, but as Cesar Chavez noted, "There is no such thing as defeat in nonviolence."

▲ **Nick Mele** is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer who writes on foreign affairs, nonviolence and other justice issues for a variety of publications. He is currently a Washington state promoter for Campaign Nonviolence.

## Nick's Picks

### Readings on Non-Violence

- |                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 🕊 Daniel Berrigan, SJ | 🕊 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. |
| 🕊 Dorothy Day         | 🕊 Thomas Merton                   |
| 🕊 Fr. John Dear       | 🕊 Henri Nouwen                    |
| 🕊 James Douglass      | 🕊 Terrence J. Rynne               |
| 🕊 Mohandas Gandhi     | 🕊 Walter Wink                     |

### Web Resources

- 🕊 US chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation—[forusa.org](http://forusa.org)
- 🕊 Non-denominational resources—[mettacentr.org](http://mettacentr.org)
- 🕊 The Campaign Nonviolence Initiative—[paceebene.org](http://paceebene.org)
- 🕊 Pax Christi USA—[paxchristiusa.org](http://paxchristiusa.org)



# A Call to a Life of Nonviolence

by Denny Duffell

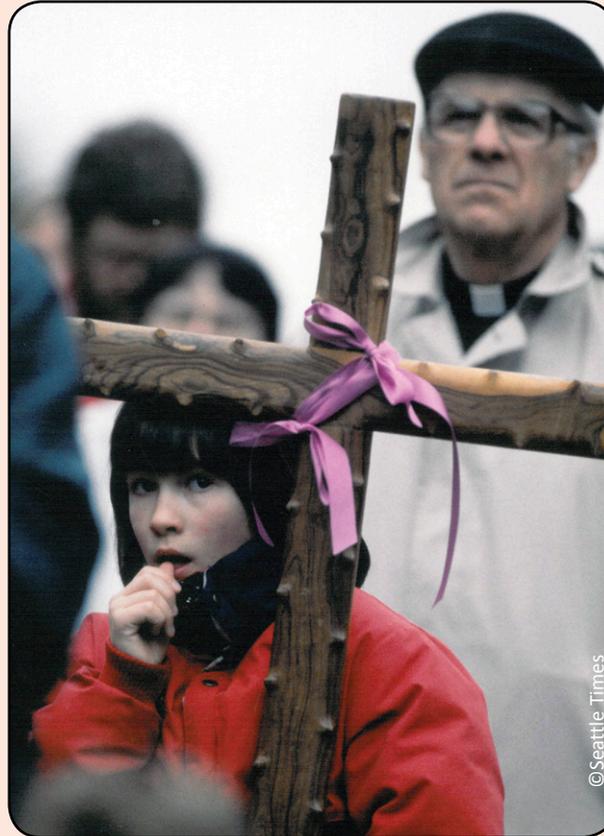
**D**enny Duffell is a deacon living in NE Seattle and a member of Pax Christi. A Matter of Spirit (AMOS) asked him a few questions about his commitment to nonviolence.

## AMOS: What encounters have led you to a nonviolent lifestyle?

I was short and scrappy as a kid, but a fight on asphalt, when I threw another kid to the ground and knocked him out, instantly replaced my anger with a dread that I had hurt someone seriously—and it changed my life. I still remember that day.

I matured as a student in the late '60s, influenced by the civil rights struggle and the anti-war movement. I was raised Catholic, and my reflections on Jesus' life and teachings led me to reject war, war-making and preparing for war. I sought and received Conscientious Objector status. Instead of serving as a soldier in Vietnam, I spent four years as a Jesuit Volunteer, embracing practical poverty, living in community and working to make a difference in the lives of the poor. Soon afterwards I met and was deeply moved by Cesar Chavez and his nonviolent struggle for justice, with its strong spiritual roots. I began to read seriously the writings of King, Merton and Dorothy Day.

In the late '70s and early '80s my wife and I lived with the Seattle Catholic Worker community and helped campaign against the Trident nuclear submarine base at Bangor. My "day job" was at an inner city parish, first staffing a food bank and eventually learning neighborhood organizing. Of course, Archbishop Hunthausen was a terrific inspiration; his picture is still on my wall.



Denny's daughter Janice & Archbishop Hunthausen, Bangor 1984

Circumstances moved us from our parish and community, but the changes led to my current ministries at St. Bridget Church and Children's Hospital in Seattle, where I minister as a chaplain. This is a precious gift to my life, and the families have taught me much. One cannot work there without being moved to compassion. This work has taught me that building peace and holding the broken heart are very similar.

## AMOS: When do you feel challenged in living nonviolently?

Personally: traffic, child-raising and struggles within the family. *Nonviolent child-raising is one of the most important skills we can learn*, but one not easy to master. But in our highly violent culture, what work could be both more immediate and more important for the long haul than to teach our chil-

dren how to respect others and solve problems together? Sure, it's difficult—my own children struggle daily with the challenges of raising our grandchildren, though they are surely more conscientious than I was. My wife Joan and the organization she heads, the Committee for Children, is a national leader in social and emotional learning for young children. Their Second Step program, teaching empathetic listening, problem-solving and impulse control to the very young, is changing the world! Yet even for a program like this, in 25,000 schools, it's still one classroom and one child at a time. Each of us can make our individual difference; peace begins in the human heart.

## AMOS: What are the opportunities to nonviolence for all of us?

Again, we *can* make a difference in the community around us, and it spreads from there. At 67 years, I'm still learning and searching. Last year I took the "Vow of Nonviolence" with others as public witness, and we just renewed our commitment again in December. Why not seek out others to join you to take a pledge? *Why don't we all make peacemaking more intentional?* I found that taking this vow intensified my passion for peacebuilding; I find myself reading about nonviolence, talking with individuals and groups, writing letters and looking for creative ways to raise my voice... yearning and praying for justice and peace. And yes, examining my own heart and relationships, and looking to join with others in non-violent movements for justice.

I know I'm just one guy, but I believe people all over yearn for this. *Don't you?*

# Ending the Spiral of Violence

by Annapatrice Clarke

The last four years gave birth to a new generation of uprisings. From Tunisia to Egypt, Mexico to Mali, Hong Kong to Burkina Faso to US streets with Ferguson, a fervor for justice enkindled social movements in more than 50 countries. People around the world are rising up and demanding justice and freedom. But *how* is that goal achieved: violently or nonviolently? Violent insurrections often repeat themselves, with massive bloodshed. Violence spirals endlessly into ever-harsher responses, but it doesn't need to do so. We can end the spiral with the power of nonviolence.

Dom Hélder Câmara, an archbishop in Brazil during its military dictatorship, describes the three-part violent path in his *Spiral of Violence*. The originating violence, he says, is **injustice**: “You will find that everywhere the injustices are... the basic violence.”<sup>1</sup> When people's rights are suppressed—in high unemployment rates, unjust wage disparities, rising costs of living, censorship and denied civic freedoms—it is violence.

People grow unwilling to accept the injustices they have been forced to endure. They rebel, demanding rights and dignity. **Revolt** is the second violence.

When oppressors see their power challenged, they respond with force. Câmara calls this the third violence: **repression**. When we use violence to show that violence is wrong, we act discordantly and oppressors maintain moral justification to continue. Repression creates more injustices, which lead to uprisings. The spiral continues, with each iteration more deeply entrenching the pattern. This is the spiral of violence.

*We practice courageous love in the face of fear.*

Martin Luther King Jr. described this phenomenon poetically:

*The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy... Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.*

Overall, violence dehumanizes. A person trained to hate or kill another no longer sees a human, but rather an object.

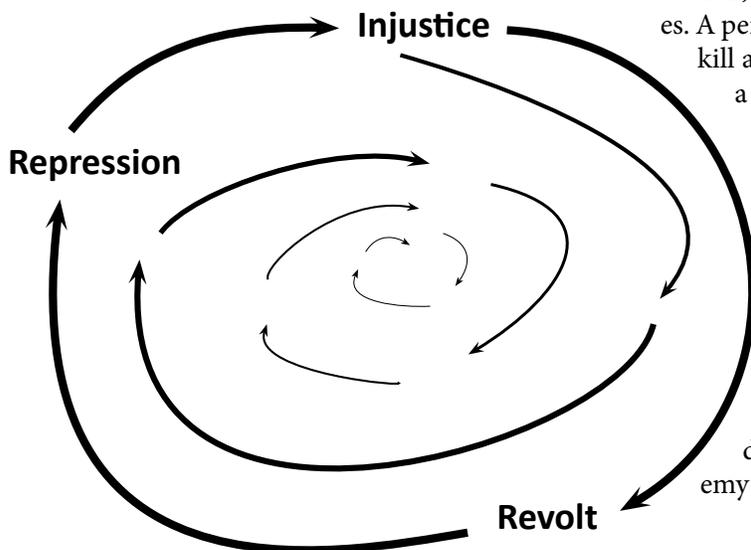
Yet, there is another way. We hold the power to end this descending spiral. When we choose nonviolence, we choose love. We decide to see our enemy as a human being

and refuse to give in to the dehumanizing cycle. Some may call nonviolence cowardice, but it requires great courage to acknowledge that restoring the humanity of your attacker is more important than revenge. It is also successful: a study by Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth of 323 conflicts in the 20th century shows nonviolent uprisings were twice as successful as violent ones.<sup>2</sup> Gandhi reflected, “Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.” Repressive governments retain control through fear of punishment—often very brutal punishment. It takes time and effort to get over that fear, but once we do, the power of love is immensely stronger and more resilient.

When we participate in boycotts, marches, protests, vigils, letter-writing; get to know our enemies or bring gifts to those trying to hurt us, we practice courageous love in the face of fear. We proclaim the greatest force in the world is the deepest truth: each human being has value. As Srdja Popovic, a leader of the Serbian Revolution now making nonviolence his life's work, says, “Ultimately, power in society comes from the obedience of the people. And those people—each of whom is individually a small source of power—can change their minds and refuse to follow commands.” Nonviolence reminds people that they have power, simply through being human. Nonviolence re-humanizes in three ways: our “enemy” to us, us to ourselves, and us to our “enemy.”

When we communicate with people who are different from us, we become more able to see their perspective and can then better address their—and our—fears and biases. While in jail for rebellious acts, Bassam Aramin, a Pal-

## Spiral of Violence





©editrix / Flickr

maintaining nonviolent in the face of force requires courage and a strong belief that we are fully worthy of receiving justice and dignity.

Furthermore, we humanize ourselves to our opponents. Boycotts, strikes, marches and comedic skits show people who support the oppressor that the resistance is made up of individuals with wants, needs and personalities. When the “enemy” knows our name,

Imagine what would be possible if we each found creative ways to challenge power structures, show people their power, humanize each other and encourage the defection of supporters on important issues. For instance, the US has not been this politically polarized since the Civil War. How can we re-humanize each other, not as enemies, but as people in the system? These methods can be used in our households, communities and jobs, in companies and governments. We can each do something with our power to end the spiral of violence and create a better, more just world.

Our time is full of violence—in Central America, Syria, Sudan and more. Yet, we remember that hope is not lost. Martin Luther King Jr. concludes his earlier statement; “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” We can choose non-violence. We can choose love.

▲ **Annapatrice Clarke** is the editor of *A Matter of Spirit* and has a degree in Peace Studies & Political Science from the University of Notre Dame.

estinian, watched a movie about the Holocaust. He remembered, “I tried to hide my tears from the other prisoners who wouldn’t have understood why I was crying about the pain of my oppressors.” He started talking with his Israeli guard. Eventually friendship replaced the animosity between the two.<sup>3</sup>

We also humanize ourselves to ourselves. Years of oppression and messages of worthlessness can be internalized as self-dehumanization. We cannot, however, make others see our humanity when we cannot see it ourselves. Re-

holds our children, shares a meal with us and understands our point of view, ideologies begin to shift. People can no longer rationalize using force against someone they understand. Defections happen in practically every revolution, whether by just a few individuals or nearly the entire military, such as in the Color Revolutions of Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia.

When we choose to humanize, the spiral stops. Governments are toppled, but more importantly, hearts are changed.

## Nonviolence in Colombia

by Julia Duranti



©Julia Duranti

Buenaventura, the city of Colombia’s largest port, is often described by its extremes: the unemployment (50 percent), poverty (80 percent), forced displacement—disproportionately high even in a country with the world’s second largest internally displaced population. Buenaventura is home to more

than 400,000 people: mostly Afro-Colombians whose ancestors developed a culture in harmony with the ocean. But powerful economic interests battling for port control turned Buenaventura into one of Colombia’s most violent cities. Paramilitary groups enabled by corrupt politicians have established a brutal rule, using extortion, torture and murder to terrify residents into silence.

In April 2014, the community of La Playita, an oceanfront neigh-

borhood impacted by port expansion and illegal armed groups, took a stand against fear and violence. Accompanied by Colombian organizations and international NGOs like Witness for Peace, the community established Colombia’s first urban humanitarian space, called Puente Nayero. The space was inaugurated with popular education workshops, music and dance, acts that celebrated life over death and peace over violence and an assembly in which 800 families committed to participating in a space governed by nonviolence and free of illegal armed actors.

Since then, Puente Nayero and its leaders have been threatened by local paramilitaries, but the space’s continued existence is a testament to the strength of the community’s commitment to nonviolent organizing, as well as how national and international companions with nonviolence as their mandate help elevate the community’s profile to raise the political cost of violence against it. Walking with Puente Nayero as they reclaim a space for life, build community within it and assert their political power outside it has been an incredible privilege. It reinforces the importance of Witness for Peace’s mission of physical accompaniment informing popular education, which in turn elevates international attention and action in solidarity with the nonviolent struggles of those seeking justice throughout Latin America.

▲ **Julia Duranti** has worked with the Witness for Peace Colombia International Team for two years.

# Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

by Lucy McBath

It was two years ago last month that I found myself on a path I did not choose, fighting a battle I did not start, advocating to change dangerous gun laws I never knew existed. My son, Jordan—just 17 years old—was shot and killed by an armed man in Florida in a dispute over loud music. Jordan was unarmed and seated in the back seat of his friend’s car when the man open fired, ripping him of his young life, and me of my only child.

I knew after this experience that God was calling me for a higher purpose: to help prevent others from undergoing the unspeakable pain of losing loved ones in such a senseless way.

Today, I serve as spokesperson for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a grassroots movement of moms founded the day after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary

spect the rights of citizens, yet protect people from gun violence. Our moms and supporters know there are solutions to curb the gun violence epidemic in America, and we are working every day to do just that.

Since the tragedy at Sandy Hook, not a single law has been passed at the federal level to prevent gun violence.

laws at the state level, like closing the dangerous background check loophole on gun purchases. In this last midterm election, voters in Washington State took to the polls on a ballot initiative to close these loopholes and expand background checks for all gun sales. Gun safety won by an impressive majority, and we expect other states with ballot initiatives to follow suit in coming elections.

Over the summer, more than a million Americans took our Gun Sense Voter Pledge, committing to vote for candidates who support common-sense gun laws, and our supporters made thousands of phone calls encouraging voters to head to the polls. On election night, we saw the candidates who have publicly supported and enacted common-sense gun laws elected.

I, and so many Americans across this great country, are empowered by the stories of success we have in building a community of advocates demanding not one more life be lost to senseless gun violence. I call on the faith community to join us in pushing for change and to provide support to those whose lives have been so tragically impacted by gun violence.

We hold the future of God’s children in our hands—let’s do everything we can to help make it a blessed one. Together, we will reverse this epidemic, one family, one law, one company and one election at a time.

▲ **Lucy McBath** is the mother of Jordan Davis and a national spokesperson for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.



Mothers march for gun reform

*Together, we will reverse this epidemic...*

that took the lives of 20 first graders and 6 educators. The movement was started by a mom on a Facebook page, and has since become a part of the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country—Everytown for Gun Safety—with more than 2.5 million members and a Moms Chapter in every state.

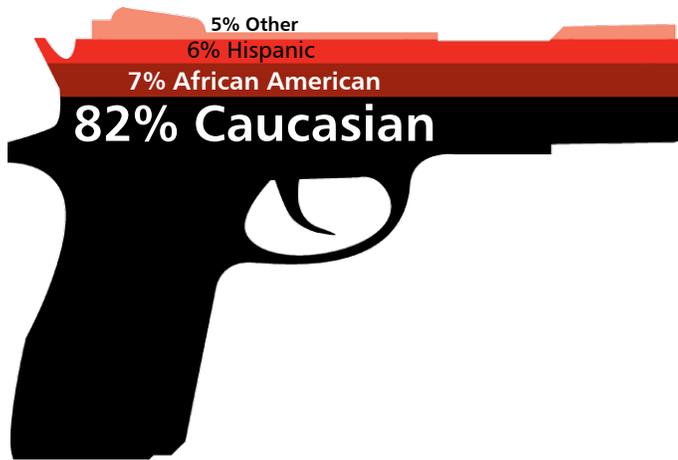
Since its inception just two years ago, Moms Demand Action has been at the forefront of this movement, fighting for public safety measures that re-

If Congress won’t protect our children and families, moms will. We launched a corporate responsibility campaign to insist that American businesses enact policies that will protect our families when we patronize them. And succeed, we have. In just one year, moms have convinced retailers and restaurants to end the practice of open carry in their establishments—a practice that is largely unregulated in most states, meaning no training, permitting or background checks are required. Starbucks, Target, Panera, Chipotle, Sonic Drive-In and Chili’s are among the businesses that have chosen to enact smart gun policies.

Another way we are driving change is by fighting for common-sense gun

# US Guns & Violence

37% of US households own 290 million guns

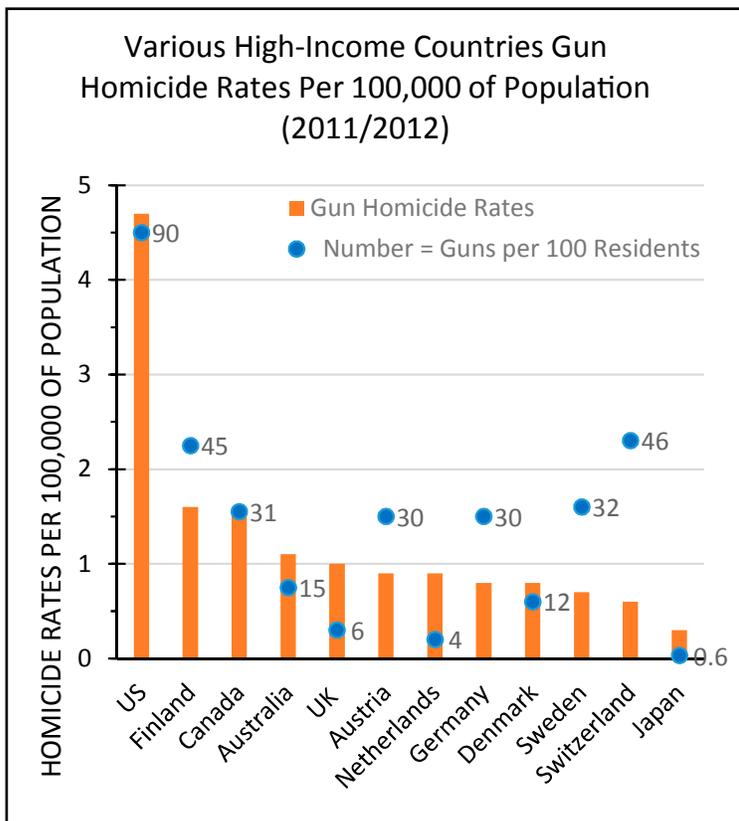


For every gun in the home used in self-defense, there are:



## Gun homicides in the US in 2012

1,370 children or teens 4 per day  
8,956 adults 25 per day



US children & teens compared to their peers in 25 other high-income countries combined:

- 32x more likely to die from gun homicide
- 10x more likely to die from a gun suicide or accident

## Vow of Nonviolence

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God... You have learned how it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy;' but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven.*

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

- ✞ by striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- ✞ by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- ✞ by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- ✞ by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- ✞ by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
- ✞ by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

Source: Pax Christi USA



US gun homicide rates have decreased 49% compared to the peak in 1993. Let us continue to work for peace and nonviolence in the world!



# INTERCOMMUNITY

## ▶ Young Adult Justice Cafés

### Spirituality: A Justice Community Special Event

In collaboration with the Seattle Archdiocese Pastoral Care Office, IPJC provided the first Justice Café for young adults with disabilities.



Young adults from the Seattle Justice Café served as facilitators

One parent said that this is the first time she experienced an opportunity for young adults with special needs to gather about issues of justice, share faith and hang out together.

## ▶ Women's Justice Circles

Circle participants in Lima, Peru, in partnership with the Municipality of El Rimac, organized *Building Awareness and Creating Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence*. The conference included congresswomen, policy makers, local authorities, psychologists, social workers and heads of women-led organizations.

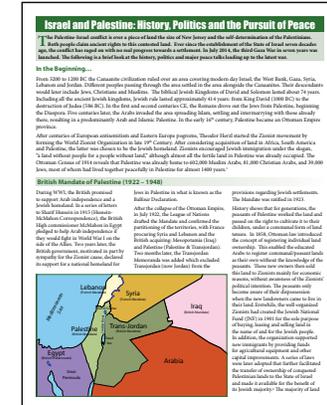
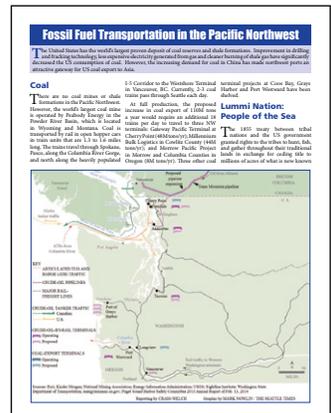


María Inés gave opening remarks

## ▶ Publications

The increasing demand for coal in China has made northwest ports an attractive gateway for US coal export to Asia.

Be sure to download the IPJC *Fossil Fuels Transportation in the Pacific Northwest* primer, providing opportunities for education, analysis, reflection and action on the issue of fossil fuels and their environmental impact.



### Israel and Palestine: History, Politics and the Pursuit of Peace

An 8-page primer on the Israel/Palestine conflict. It explores past and current events of the region as it struggles toward a path for peace.

Includes maps of the region, glossary of terms, resources for further reading and reflection questions.

Download at [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)

## Monthly Worldwide Justice Cafés

January—Upholding the Dignity of Work: Creating a Just Economic System

February—Life on Purpose: Contemplation & Justice

March—Climate Change: Our Future with Earth

April—Act for Eco-Justice!



## ▶ Just Video Contest

The IPJC Just Video Contest is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year!

If you know high school juniors or seniors, please encourage them to submit a video. Check out the official Just Video page at [www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)

**Just Video Contest 2014-2015**

Environment  
Human Rights  
Immigration

A program of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

# PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • EVENTS

## ▶ Catholic Advocacy Day

**March 26, 2015**

"Proclaim Justice & Life for All"

All are invited to join us to ensure the Gospel message to care for our brothers and sisters is heard in Olympia!



Registration opens  
**January 5, 2015**  
[www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)

## ▶ Donations

Thank you to all who supported IPJC with a donation for our Fall Appeal!



*"Those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever." —Daniel 12:3*

Remember to let us know if your company matches your donation.

**In honor of:** Nancy Dorn, IPJC staff, Rosemary Rognstad, Karen Rossman, OP, Alice Marie Schmid, OP, Sisters of the Holy Names Leadership Team, Joan Trunk

**In memory of:** Elinor Brennan, Audrey Kocarnik, Bernie Ternes, OSB

## ▶ Mark Your Calendar

### Spring Benefit Dinner

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

"A Movement in Hope"

**April 16, 2015**

**St. Demetrios Church**

Look for your invitation in the mail!

## ▶ Speaker

**Pat Kozak, CSJ**

**New Consciousness: Becoming Agents of Cultural Change**

**March 7, 2015**  
9am—12:30pm

Notice for online & mail-in registration will be sent in February

## ▶ Climate Change Booklets



Our booklets are already in their second printing! Form a group and use our new 4-session booklets!

- Our Earth Community
- The Science of Climate Change: Call to Change Course
- Ecological Conversion
- Eco-Imagining Our Emerging Future

A great Lenten opportunity!



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## Choose Peace

**Preparation:** Invite others in your community to choose peace and nonviolence. Prepare the space with a ritual cloth, candle and soft instrumental music.

### Reading

**Two Wolves** (Cherokee Legend)  
An elder Native American was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them,  
*A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.*

*The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.*

"This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too," he added. The grandchildren thought about it for a minute and then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied..."The one you feed."

### Pax Christi Vow of Nonviolence

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

- by striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;
- by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.



©Trey Ratcliff / Flickr

**Leader:** I invite you to reflect on the Pax Christi Vow of Nonviolence (p. 13) in light of the story.

- ☞ Which element of the Vow am I challenged to live?
- ☞ What can I do to nurture this step toward nonviolence?

**Leader:** I invite anyone who wishes to share a step she/he will take toward nonviolence.

### Closing Prayer

**All:** May the God of peace who loves us infinitely bless us abundantly, the Creator of peace, the Christ of peace and the Holy Spirit of peace.