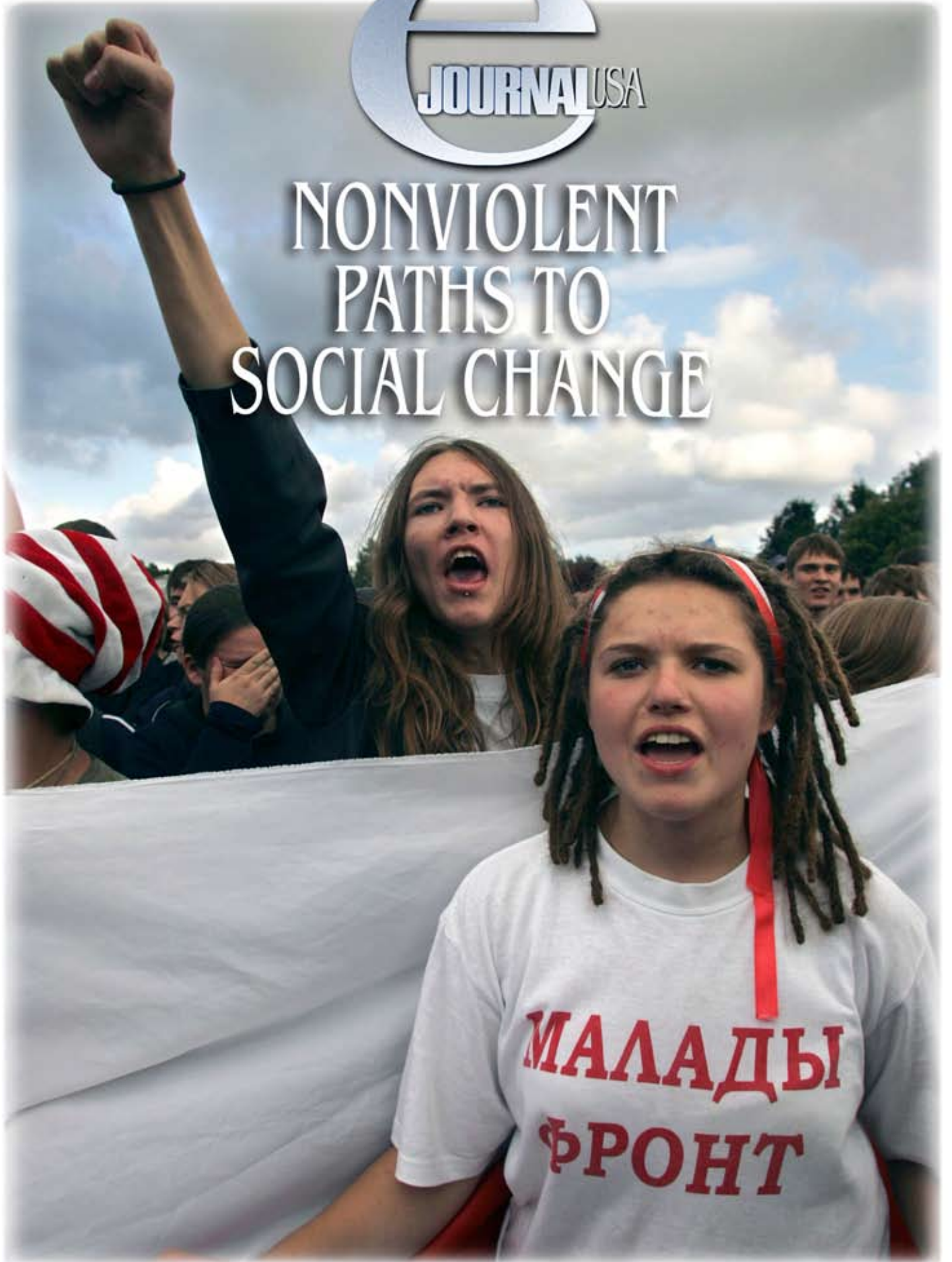




NONVIOLENT PATHS TO SOCIAL CHANGE





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Cover Photo: On Belarus's 15th anniversary of independence in 2006, supporters hold a flag during a rock concert celebration in Minsk. The words on the T-shirt read: "Young Front."

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About This Issue



Romanian demonstrators against terrorists in 2004.

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Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. and their followers did not accept oppression and second-rate status. They actively pursued practical, nonviolent ways to free their people.

The past 30 years have seen a surge of nonviolent, “people power” movements around the world advancing human rights and toppling repressive rulers. Using information campaigns, boycotts, demonstrations, and other tactics, protesters have shown that nonviolent actions can be more powerful than armed insurrections in bringing about social change.

An Anglo-American intellectual tradition of nonviolent thought goes back centuries, spreading to communities large and small in the United States and beyond. Today community organizers in the United States help people assert their rights before local elected governments. Individuals around the world lead nonviolent movements in a great variety of campaigns to save local forests from destruction, local villagers from death by landmine, and local children from lives of ignorance.

Internet-based social-networking technology promises to give people even more powerful tools to promote change, as President Barack Obama demonstrated in his 2008 election campaign.

“Whenever you improve a group’s ability to communicate with one another, you change the things they are able to accomplish together,” Internet consultant Clay Shirky writes in this issue of *eJournal USA*.

A well-known example is a Facebook.com group started by young people from Bogota, Columbia, called No Mas FARC. Online they organized protest demonstrations against the FARC, a Colombian terrorist organization, turning out 12 million people in 190 cities around the world. In December 2008 the leaders of the anti-FARC group met with other youth groups from 15 countries in New York and formed the Alliance of Youth Movements, which is dedicated to helping these groups use online technology to counter violence.

Recent science suggests that these movements are rooted deep in the human psyche. War, for example, may not be a genetically determined part of human nature. Game theory suggests that getting along is not natural either, but that under certain conditions people do learn to cooperate to make everyone better off.

The contributors to this publication show collectively that armed violence is not necessary to achieve positive change. All they are saying is give nonviolence a chance.

— *The Editors*



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Why Nonviolence Works

The Power of Nonviolent Action

Stephen Zunes



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People power movements, such as this one in 1989 in Czechoslovakia, have helped bring down scores of authoritarian regimes.

Armed insurgencies impose great human costs. Nonviolent “people power” movements succeed by calling attention to official repression and winning support from the undecided.

*Stephen Zunes is a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco. He is the principal co-editor of *Nonviolent Social Movements* (Blackwell, 1999) and chairs the committee of academic advisors for the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.*

Nonviolent action campaigns have been a part of political life for millennia, challenging abuses by authorities, spearheading social reforms, demanding an end to colonial rule, and protesting militarism and discrimination.

India’s Mohandas Gandhi and the United States’ Martin Luther King Jr., who were both brilliant strategic

thinkers as well as great moral leaders, are perhaps the best-known leaders of such movements. Not only were they committed to nonviolent action as the most effective means of waging their respective struggles; they also held to a deep faith-based commitment to nonviolence as a personal ethic. In many respects, however, Gandhi and King were unusual in their personal commitment to principled nonviolence, as the vast majority of nonviolent movements and their leaders have not been pacifists but embraced nonviolent action as the best strategic means to advance their struggles.

Indeed, primarily nonviolent struggles in recent decades have not only led to significant political and social reforms advancing the cause of human rights, but have also even toppled repressive regimes from power and forced leaders to change the very nature of their governance. As a result, nonviolent resistance has



Black Star/Bob Fitch

Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi embraced nonviolence both in principle and as strategy.

been evolving from an ad hoc strategy associated with religious or ethical principles into a reflective, even institutionalized, method of struggle.

Indeed, the past 30 years have witnessed a remarkable upsurge in nonviolent insurrections against autocratic rulers. Primarily nonviolent “people power” movements have been responsible for advancing democratic change in nearly 60 countries during this period, forcing substantial reforms in many countries. Other struggles, while eventually suppressed, have nevertheless posed serious challenges to other despots.

In contrast to armed struggles, these nonviolent insurrections are movements of organized popular resistance to government authority that, either consciously or by necessity, eschew the use of weapons of modern warfare.

Unlike conventional political movements, nonviolent campaigns usually employ tactics outside the mainstream

political processes of electioneering and lobbying. Tactics may include strikes, boycotts, mass demonstrations, the popular contestation of public space, refusal to pay taxes, destruction of symbols of government authority (such as official identification cards), refusal to obey official orders (such as curfew restrictions), and the creation of alternative institutions for political legitimacy and social organization.

WHY NONVIOLENCE WORKS

For many years there was an assumption that autocratic regimes could be overthrown only through popular armed struggle or foreign military intervention. Yet there is an increasing awareness that nonviolent action can actually be more powerful than violence. A recent academic study of 323 major insurrections in support of self-determination and freedom from autocratic rule over the past century revealed that major nonviolent campaigns were successful 53 percent of the time, whereas primarily violent resistance campaigns were successful only 26 percent of the time. (Maria J. Stephan and Eric Chenoweth. “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” *International Security*, vol. 33, no. 1, Summer 2008.)

There are several reasons why insurgents have turned away from armed struggle to embrace nonviolent action. One reason is a growing awareness of the increasing costs of insurgency warfare. Technology has given status quo powers an increasing advantage in recent years in defeating or at least neutralizing armed insurgencies. Even when an armed revolutionary movement is victorious, large segments of the population are displaced, farms and villages are destroyed, cities and much of the country’s infrastructure are severely damaged, the economy is wrecked, and there is widespread environmental devastation. The net result is an increasing realization that the benefits of waging an armed insurrection may not be worth the costs.

Another factor endorsing nonviolence is the tendency, once in power, for victorious armed movements against dictatorships to fail in establishing pluralistic, democratic, and independent political systems capable of supporting social and economic development and promoting human rights. These shortcomings often result in part from counterrevolution, natural disasters, foreign intervention, trade embargoes, and other circumstances beyond a victorious popular movement’s control.

However, the choice of armed struggle as a means of securing power tends to exacerbate these problems and creates troubles of its own. For one, armed struggle often promotes the ethos of a secret elite vanguard, downplaying democracy and showing less tolerance for pluralism. Often, disagreements that could be resolved peaceably in non-militarized institutions lead to bloody factional fighting. Some countries experienced military coups or civil wars not long after armed revolutionary movements ousted colonialists or indigenous dictators. Others became overly dependent on foreign powers for weapons to keep them in power.

There is also an increasing awareness that armed resistance tends to upset undecided elements of the population, who then seek security in the government. When facing a violent insurgency, a government can easily justify its repression. But force used against unarmed resistance movements usually creates greater sympathy for the government's opponents. Some have compared this phenomenon with the martial art of aikido, in that the opposition movement leverages the power of state repression to advance the movement's ends.

In addition, unarmed campaigns involve far more participants beyond the young able-bodied men normally found in the ranks of armed guerrillas, taking advantage of a popular movement's majority support. Unarmed resistance also encourages the creation of alternative institutions, which further undermine the repressive status quo and form the basis for a new independent and democratic order.

Armed resistance often backfires by legitimizing the use of repressive tactics. Violence from the opposition is often welcomed by authoritarian governments and even encouraged through the use of agents provocateurs, because it then justifies state repression. But state violence unleashed on unarmed dissidents often triggers a turning point in nonviolent struggles. A government attack against peaceful demonstrators can be the spark that transforms periodic protests into a full-scale insurrection.

SOWING DIVISION

Unarmed resistance movements also tend to sow divisions within pro-government circles. There are often disagreements regarding how to deal effectively with the resistance, since few governments are as prepared to deal with unarmed revolts as they are to quash armed ones. Violent repression of a peaceful movement can often alter

popular and elite perceptions of the legitimacy of power, which is why state officials usually use less repression against nonviolent movements. In addition, some pro-government elements become less concerned about the consequences of a compromise with insurgents if their resistance is nonviolent.

Unarmed movements also increase the likelihood of defections and noncooperation by unmotivated police and military personnel, whereas armed revolts legitimize the role of the government's coercive apparatus, enhancing its self-perception as the protector of civil society. The moral power of nonviolence is crucial in the ability of an opposition movement to reframe the perceptions of key parties: the public, political elites, and the military, most of whom have no difficulty supporting the use of violence against violent insurrections.

The efficacy of nonviolent resistance in dividing supporters of the status quo is apparent not only in rendering government troops less effective, but also in challenging the attitudes of an entire nation and even foreign actors, as in the South African struggle against apartheid. Pictures of peaceful protesters — including whites, members of the clergy, and other “upstanding citizens” — broadcast on television worldwide lent legitimacy to antiapartheid forces and undermined the South African government in a way that the armed rebellion was unable to do. As nonviolent resistance within the country escalated, external pressure in the form of economic sanctions and other solidarity tactics by the international community raised the costs of maintaining the apartheid system.

Due to increased global interdependence, the nonlocal audience for a conflict may be just as important as the immediate community. Just as Gandhi played to British citizens in Manchester and London, organizers of the civil rights movement in the U.S. South were communicating to the entire nation, and especially to the administration of President John Kennedy.

Insurgency within the Soviet bloc was disseminated by television broadcasts that spread the news from country to country, legitimating local protests that no longer seemed like isolated events organized by unstable dissidents. The prominent role of the global media during the anti-Marcos people power movement in 1986 was instrumental in forcing the U.S. government to scale back its support of the Philippine dictator. Israeli repression of nonviolent protests by Palestinians during the first intifada of the late 1980s brought unprecedented international sympathy

to their struggle against foreign military occupation. As Palestinian-American scholar Rashid Khalidi observed, the Palestinians had “succeeded at last in conveying the reality of their victimization to world public opinion.”

As a proactive ingredient in nonviolent resistance, the creation of alternative structures provides both a moral and a practical underpinning for efforts aimed at bringing about fundamental social change. Parallel structures in civil society may render state control increasingly impotent, as they did throughout Eastern Europe leading up to the events of 1989.

In the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos lost power in 1986 not through the defeat of his troops and the storming of the Malacañang Palace, but from the withdrawal of sufficient support for his authority, so that the palace became the only part of the country he could effectively control. On the same day that Marcos was officially sworn in for another term as president in a state ceremony, his opponent — Corazon Aquino, widow of an assassinated Marcos critic — was symbolically sworn in as the people’s president. Given that most Filipinos saw Marcos’s election as fraudulent, the vast majority offered its allegiance to President Aquino rather than to President Marcos. The transfer of allegiance from one source of authority and legitimacy to another is a key element of a successful nonviolent uprising.

In the course of a successful nonviolent revolution, and with adequate popular participation, political authority may be wrested from the state and invested in institutions of civil society as these parallel institutions grow in effectiveness and legitimacy. The state may become increasingly impotent and irrelevant as parallel nongovernmental institutions take over an increasing portion of the tasks of governing a society, providing services to the populace, and creating functional equivalents to the institutions of the state.

INDIGENOUS ROOTS

Citing the financial support provided by some outside foundations funded by Western governments to some opposition groups that later took part in the so-called color revolutions among nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, some authoritarian regimes have

denied the popular legitimacy of these pro-democracy movements by claiming they were simply “soft coups” plotted by the United States or other Western powers. Such outside funding cannot cause a nonviolent liberal democratic revolution to take place, however, any more than Soviet financial and material support for leftist movements in previous decades could cause an armed socialist revolution to take place. One Burmese human rights activist, referring to his country’s centuries-old tradition of popular resistance, noted how the very idea of an outsider having to orchestrate the Burmese people to engage in a nonviolent action campaign is like “teaching a grandma to peel onions.”

Successful revolutions, whatever their ideological orientation, are the result of certain objective conditions. Indeed, no amount of money could force hundreds of thousands of people to leave their jobs, homes, schools, and families to face down heavily armed police and tanks and put their bodies on the line unless they had a sincere motivation to do so.

Foreign powers have historically promoted regime change through military invasions, coup d’etats, and other kinds of violent seizures of power that install an undemocratic minority. Nonviolent people power movements, by contrast, make regime change possible through empowering pro-democratic majorities.

There is no standardized formula for success that a foreign government or a foreign nongovernmental organization could put together, because the history, culture, and political alignments of each country are unique. No foreign government or NGO can recruit or mobilize the large numbers of ordinary civilians necessary to build a movement capable of effectively challenging the established political leadership, much less of toppling a government.

As a result, the best hope for advancing freedom and democracy among oppressed nations of the world comes not from armed struggle and not from the intervention of foreign powers, but from democratic civil society organizations engaged in strategic nonviolent action. ■

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Nonviolent Thought Through U.S. History

Ira Chernus



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The nonviolent Vietnam War protests of the 1960s followed the example of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Rooted in 16th-century Europe, the intellectual traditions of nonviolent thought and action were developed in the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries and traveled abroad to Asia and Africa.

Ira Chernus is professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder and author of American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea.

When people set out to create social change, they have to decide whether to use violence to achieve their aims. Some who opt for nonviolence may have no objection to violence in principle. They just believe that violence will not succeed in gaining their goals, or they are afraid of getting hurt, or they can't persuade others to join them in violence. Theirs is the nonviolence of convenience, or pragmatic nonviolence.

But over the centuries there have been many who might have gained their goals through violence — who had the means, the courage, and the strength to do violence — yet freely decided not to do violence under any circumstances. They followed the way of principled nonviolence. Though many have been inspired to adopt principled nonviolence for emotional and cultural reasons, they have also been moved by the rich intellectual tradition that offers logical arguments on behalf of nonviolence.

That intellectual tradition runs like an underground stream through U.S. history. Its roots go back to the Anabaptist Christians of Europe in the 16th century, the era when Protestant Christianity began. The Anabaptists rejected violence because they were committed to staying separated from the mainstream society and its many conflicts. Some of their descendants came to the United States, where they established what are known as the historic peace churches.

The distinctive American contribution came when other Christians, who were deeply involved in the conflicts of society, decided on principle to pursue political and social change using only nonviolent means. The process began in colonial times, before the United States declared its independence from Britain, among members of the Society of Friends, known as Quakers. Their strict commitment to nonviolence led some of them to oppose the payment of taxes for war, the enslavement of African Americans, and the persecution and displacement of Native American peoples. But the Quakers were primarily a religious group, whose beliefs led them to nonviolence.



Abolitionist Wendell Phillips delivers an antislavery speech on the Boston Common in April 1851.

The great turning point came in the 1820s and 1830s, when a group of people from different religious backgrounds began to demand the abolition of slavery in the United States. These abolitionists were nearly all Christians, and not all of them were committed to pursuing their goal nonviolently. Those who were, however, created the first group that formed around a goal of political-social change and then chose nonviolence as their means. They believed in God as the supreme ruler of the universe. Therefore, they said, no human should ever exercise authority over another human. On that basis they denounced slavery. But since violence is always a way of exercising authority, they were led logically to renounce violence, too.

The same line of thinking influenced the great essayist Henry David Thoreau to go to jail rather than pay taxes to a government that supported war and slavery. In his famous 1849 essay “Civil Disobedience,” Thoreau explained that he would never obey an unjust law,

regardless of what punishment he received, because people should follow their own conscience rather than passively follow the government’s demands. Thoreau’s main goal was to maintain his own moral virtue and his freedom to act on the truth as he saw it. But he did point out that if enough people refused to obey unjust laws, they could “clog the machinery” of the state.

TOLSTOY AND GANDHI

The writings of the abolitionists and Thoreau inspired the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy to become an ardent exponent of Christian nonviolence. His writings, in turn, helped to shape the ideas of the greatest of all nonviolent activists, the leader of India’s independence movement, Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi. In the 20th century, the ideas of Tolstoy and Gandhi came back to the United States and inspired many Americans, who often did not know that so much of the theory of nonviolence had originated in their own country.

For Gandhi, nonviolence was more a matter of intention than actual behavior. He defined “violence” as the intention to coerce another person to do something the other person does not want to do. Nonviolent actions such as boycotts, blockades, and disobedience to laws may look coercive, but if done in a true spirit of nonviolence, they are merely ways of following the moral truth as one sees it. They leave others free to respond in any way they choose. A follower of Gandhian nonviolence says, in the spirit of Thoreau, “I am doing what I feel I must do. Now you do whatever you feel you must do. You may jail me, beat me, or even kill me. But you cannot take away my freedom to be true to my conscience.”

Gandhi recognized that he was calling all people to act on their subjective view of truth. No one can know the whole truth, he said, and we must be open to the possibility that we will later see that we were wrong. That is why we must never aim to impose our own views on others. But we must take a firm stand — even unto death — on the truth as we see it now. Only then can we discover for ourselves what the truth is in any given situation.

Since principled nonviolence means non-coercion, people committed to nonviolence believe they are never trying to make a situation turn out the way they want it. They are working not for selfish purposes but for the good of the whole world as they see it. In fact, according to Gandhi, they should never be concerned about the

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outcome of their actions at all. They should only be sure that they are doing the morally right thing at every moment. Following the moral truth is both the means and the end of nonviolence; a right process is the goal. Therefore, nonviolence should not be judged by its ability to produce results.

The most famous exponent of nonviolence in the United States was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great spokesman for the civil rights of African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. King agreed with Gandhi that nonviolent actions must always be taken out of concern for the well-being of all people, even those who are unjust and oppressive. “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,” he proclaimed, “tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Unlike Gandhi, though, King was concerned about the results of his actions. He judged the strategies of the civil rights movement not only by their intrinsic moral virtue, but also by their effectiveness in ending discrimination against black people. He wanted to provoke conflict and win political victories.

But as long as one is working nonviolently for justice and equality, King argued, the conflict will yield greater justice and peace for everyone. So in his view, there is no conflict between success for oneself and benefit for society: “We are in the fortunate position of having our deepest sense of morality coalesce with our self-interest.” Even when our acts involve unyielding confrontation and pressure, he said, as long as we are motivated by selfless love offered equally to both sides in the conflict, we are working to harmonize the opposing sides and improve life for all. On that point, Gandhi certainly would have agreed.

RESULTS FROM NONVIOLENCE

The civil rights movement demonstrated that nonviolence can produce results, if one chooses to judge by that standard. In the 1960s, the nonviolent movement to end the Vietnam War — largely inspired by the

successes of civil rights activists — played a significant role in persuading the U.S. government to remove its troops from Vietnam.

Up to the 1960s, most Americans who committed themselves to principled nonviolence were moved by Christian religious beliefs. But the protest movement against the Vietnam War brought in many who were not Christian. The Jewish Peace Fellowship (founded in 1941) grew significantly. An emerging Buddhist peace movement was guided by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hahn and, later, the Dalai Lama.

There were also many more Americans with no religious affiliation who were drawn to nonviolence. They could find inspiration in the writings of the feminist Barbara Deming. Nonviolence is necessarily coercive, she wrote. But it forces people to stop doing only things that they have no moral right to do. It leaves intact their freedom to do whatever they have a right to do. So nonviolence is the most effective way to make lasting social and political change because it is least likely to antagonize the people being forced to change.

Since the 1960s, the United States has seen a growing interest in principled nonviolence applied to many political issues, though it still counts only a very small minority of the population among its adherents.

Nonviolence movements in the United States have also helped to spawn similar movements around the world. They have achieved major improvements in their conditions of life — most notably, in the overthrow of totalitarian regimes in places from Eastern Europe to the Philippines. Nonviolent activists helped to end long-standing and bitter conflicts in Northern Ireland, Guatemala, and East Timor, among other places. They are now active on numerous fronts in conflict zones around the world. In the long view of history, the United States is at the center of an ongoing global process of nonviolent social and political change. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

What Do Community Organizers Do?

Kathy Partridge



A community organizer, David Wilson, talks with Chicago residents about housing concerns.

Millions of U.S. citizens have used community organizers to teach them how to press governments to do the right thing.

Kathy Partridge is executive director of Interfaith Funders, a network of faith-based and secular grant makers working to advance the field of congregation-based community organizing.

In Barack Obama's 2008 presidential election campaign, the candidate cited his experience as a community organizer in Chicago to prove that he understood the problems of ordinary working people.

His opponents suggested that community organizing lacks "real responsibilities" like those of a mayor or a governor.

In fact, a community organizer's work has plenty of real responsibilities.

Let's start with a story: Some neighborhood women went to see the new "community organizer." They had heard that he fixed things, and they certainly saw plenty wrong in their neighborhood — bad schools, drug houses, filthy streets, poor health care, and more. Sitting in the simple, crowded office, they poured out their complaints while the organizer listened.

"Those are certainly some problems," he said.

"Well, what are you going to do about them?" demanded the women.

The women were flabbergasted by the reply: "Nothing." The organizer continued, "These aren't my problems; they are your problems. Let's talk about what



© AP Images/Reed Saxon

César Chavez accepted the challenge to organize farm workers.

you are going to do about them.”

That true story sums up what a community organizer does and does not do. A community organizer doesn't “fix things” — doesn't provide services or make impressive speeches. A community organizer attacks the problems and injustices of low- and moderate-income communities by helping the people affected act together to make changes themselves. This basic tenet is the Iron Rule of Organizing: “Never do for others what they can do for themselves.”

Community organizing is the deliberate practice of recruiting and empowering community leadership: uniting people to define problems, craft solutions, and press decision makers to improve the lives of a neighborhood, city, or socioeconomic group.

RECRUITING LEADERS

Community organizers recruit and empower community leadership, rather than becoming spokespersons themselves or acting on an issue alone. They do this because they believe that it is a democratic right for people to have a role in deciding issues that affect them.

Fred Ross was a trained community organizer who worked in some California Mexican neighborhoods in the 1960s and saw the desperate living conditions and difficult work for low pay. There he met César Chavez, a young man with children. Chavez was annoyed at first when Ross asked him to become a leader. Chavez later

told a story of how he had invited Ross to meet local men at his house with the idea of intimidating Ross and scaring him off. “But he started talking, and the more he talked, the more wide-eyed I became. ... A couple of guys who were pretty drunk at the time still wanted to give the gringo the business, but we got rid of them. This fellow was making a lot of sense, and I wanted to hear what he had to say.”

Ross sensed that Chavez had the talent to lead his community and came back again and again, challenging Chavez to stand up for what he believed in, until Chavez too believed that he could lead. Chavez went on to become a hero for social justice leading

the United Farmworkers Union, which won fair labor contracts with the growers. He inspired many U.S. social movements against the Vietnam War and for the rights of minorities and women.

Community organizers unite people to define problems. Rather than providing social services, they follow a process of getting people to talk to each other and to act collectively on issues, gaining personal confidence and civic skills in the process.

They begin an organizing campaign by talking with people individually or in house meetings to find out who has a talent for leadership and to identify key problems. With the support of their community organizer, the participants identify their common values and interests and then work jointly and publicly on campaigns for civic change.

As these new community leaders work together, they build stronger relationships with people in their own institutions, such as churches, schools, and neighborhoods. As they discover that they share concerns with people in other institutions or neighborhoods, they build connections across the chasms of religion, class, and race. The organizing process can generate transformational power to bring positive change to individuals, communities, and society at large.

MONEY OR PEOPLE

According to the second tenet of organizing, “power comes either through organized money or organized



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A rally for racial unity is held by a faith-based community organizing group in Warren, Michigan.

ONE-LA in 2004 had a turnout of more than 12,000 people and initiated campaigns aimed at cleaning up toxic dumps near schools, improving street lighting, and passing a \$1 billion affordable housing bond.

Organizers work with a group's leadership to craft effective public campaigns and turn concerns into winnable issues. The Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now (ACORN) has a national web of more than 400,000 member families in more than 100 cities, active on many issues.

For example, when Hurricane Katrina left New Orleans flooded for days, local ACORN organizers, many of

whom had lost their own houses, fanned through the emergency shelters, used cell phones to find scattered ACORN members, and went before city and national officials to insist that the government be fair to poor people in rebuilding the city. While they have not won all their demands, they have successfully obtained funds directed to rebuilding their ruined neighborhoods and helped thousands of residents get back into their homes.

All organizing is done locally, but that doesn't mean it stays small. In the California city of San Jose, community organizers with the PICO National Network of faith-based community organizations learned that many families went without health care because of inadequate county government spending for public clinics. They organized through local churches to press county officials to change the policies and then spread the campaign to other groups affiliated with PICO throughout California. Over several years, PICO California mobilized a coalition that won \$13.4 billion in increased education and health funding.

Community organizing groups address almost every social injustice affecting the quality of life for low- and moderate-income people: children's health care, wages, immigration reform, affordable housing, improved schools, safe neighborhoods, job training, and more.

In December 2008, more than 2,500 community organizers and leaders from around the United States

people." Since poor communities don't have money, organizers have to rely on people.

When Ernesto Cortes returned to his hometown of San Antonio, Texas, in the 1970s, he was angry that the poorer Spanish-speaking section of the city lacked the services that the other sections enjoyed. In fact, streets flooded so badly when it rained that a child had drowned! As a trained organizer with the national organizing network Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), Cortes went to the local Catholic churches and challenged the parishioners to press the city government to make massive infrastructure repairs in streets and sewers and to improve public safety.

After achieving some success in San Antonio, Cortes worked in poor communities throughout Texas, from urban Houston to the *colonias*, or rural settlements, of the Mexico border, forging a new, larger-scale model of organization that united many institutions and could act on state-level issues. They leveraged \$8 million for the 1997-98 supplemental state funding program for the IAF's Alliance Schools; created a \$12 million fund for long-term training for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients; and designed a bond package for \$250 million in state bonds to bring water and sewer services to the *colonias* along the Texas-Mexico border.

Cortes has since turned his talents to Los Angeles, where the inaugural meeting of the IAF organization

assembled at a forum in Washington where they heard from Valerie Jarrett, senior adviser to then-President-elect Obama. They had suggestions for elements of the president-elect's economic recovery plan: to prevent housing foreclosures and require concessions from banks receiving government bailouts; to reform the ailing American health care system, especially ensuring that all children receive coverage; and to include training for jobs that pay wages adequate for a decent life.

PAID AND UNPAID

Where do community organizers come from? They can be residents who pull their neighbors together to take action, working without pay, simply out of conviction. Often, they are local religious leaders, and they are found engaged in small-scale grassroots organizing in nearly every American community.

But community organizing in the United States can also be a paid profession on a larger scale. That kind of community organizing originated in the work of the late Saul Alinsky, who honed his techniques, based on radical union organizing, in the stockyards neighborhoods of Chicago in the 1930s. Alinsky brought together diverse ethnic groups to fight for fair delivery of city services, including police protection from crime, and for fair bank lending.

Hundreds of men and women of all ages and races now earn their living as community organizers. Their pay comes through dues paid by members of the organizations they work for, as well as from donations from churches and private foundations. Many organizers are recruited from the ranks of the membership, while others attend training held by national organizing networks, on college campuses, or through the labor movement.

Community organizers in the United States today may work on a single issue or unite one constituency, such as people with disabilities. But more commonly, the community organizing movement is intentionally multi-issue, multi-constituency, interfaith, and cross-class.

President Obama gained his experience in institution-based organizing, which forms federations of member groups such as churches, schools, and even soccer leagues. He worked on the South Side of Chicago in the early 1980s, prior to attending law school, in association with the Gamaliel Foundation national organizing network, which provides training and oversight for organizations in 20 states. After graduating from law school, Obama returned to Illinois and continued his connection to organizing. Famously, he successfully courted his future wife, Michelle, by taking her to an organizing training session in a church basement.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama turned to some of his community organizing mentors to create the effective Campaign for Change, incorporating tools of community organizing such as one-to-one relationship building, house meetings, and neighborhood teams.

Over the past decade, community organizing has seen extraordinary expansion in the number of geographic areas and constituencies involved, in the kinds of tactics used, and in the effectiveness of improving public policies and services. Community organizing now operates at a grand scale that U.S. social movements rarely achieve, with thousands of institutions and millions of citizens involved. ■

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The E-Campaign: Rallying Volunteers and Voters

David Talbot



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The Obama presidential campaign made extensive use of the Internet to connect with potential supporters.

The 2008 election victory of Barack Obama showed that Web-based tools for donating money and efficiently harnessing the efforts of large numbers of volunteers can be extraordinarily powerful.

David Talbot is chief correspondent at Technology Review magazine.

The 2008 U.S. presidential election showed the great power of online social networks to bring about change.

In 2007 and 2008, the political campaign of Barack Obama made extensive use of the Web, creating simple interfaces for supporters to organize themselves, donate money, raise awareness on specific issues such as health care reform, and contact voters. This was done at a

scale that not only far exceeded what had been done in previous elections, but also surpassed the Web operations of Obama's opponents — Senator John McCain in the general election, and, earlier, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in the Democratic Party primary elections.

Obama's online campaign strategy represented a natural evolution from his roots as a community organizer in Chicago. And it took advantage of the vast new interest in online social networks generally.

In recent years, hundreds of millions of people around the world have flocked to social-networking Web sites such as MySpace, Facebook, hi5, and Orkut, finding that they provide very powerful and simple ways to connect with friends, organize groups, share hobbies, and join causes. The Obama campaign established its presence within some of these sites, notably including Facebook,



Brought together by online tools, Obama supporters Kulia Petzoldt, left, and Donna Kain take part in a campaign playgroup meeting.

© AP Images/Susan Walsh

information. You could establish your own fund-raising efforts and engage your friends and acquaintances in meeting a target that you would set.

Within MyBO, supporters' self-directed fund-raising efforts raked in \$30 million from 70,000 people. Notably, this part of the fund-raising required virtually no effort from Obama campaign staff, freeing them to perform other tasks.

Once you gave the campaign your e-mail address, you would get messages from the campaign — sometimes signed by Obama's wife, Michelle, or even by former Vice President Al Gore, who lost the 2000 presidential election to George W. Bush but went on to win a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on global

which had a huge Obama supporter network.

But more importantly, the campaign created its own social-networking site, called my.barackobama.com, or MyBO for short. It was custom-built by a private company named Blue State Digital, based in Washington, D.C. The results were impressive. Obama's campaign collected \$500 million in online donations from more than 3 million people. And thanks to MyBO — plus other strategies, including asking people at rallies to text message their e-mail addresses to the campaign — Obama developed a vast army of online volunteers. When the campaign ended, he held a list of 13 million supporters and their e-mail addresses, an enormous achievement.

AN ABUNDANCE OF OPTIONS

The hallmark of MyBO was simplicity and constant focus on prodding visitors to take some kind of action that helped the campaign. When you visited MyBO, a variety of options presented themselves. You could click a button to bring up a form for donating money. You could click another button to organize a small party for Obama at your home and download campaign literature to hand out to your friends and neighbors at the party.

If you didn't want to host such an event, you could find one near your home by looking at a Google Maps application that showed icons of available parties. Click the icon, and you would get the address and contact

warming. These messages would ask people to perform specific functions that were helpful to the campaign at that time, perhaps calling undecided voters in such important U.S. states as Ohio and Pennsylvania, where the election was too close to call.

The campaign also rallied people based on geography, for example, providing MyBO members with lists of people living nearby who were not registered to vote and instructions for contacting and registering them. And they asked military veterans who supported Obama to volunteer to make telephone calls. For these volunteers, they created special phone lists, available through the Web, of other veterans to call in tightly contested states. Cultivating veterans became particularly important because Obama, who had not served in the military, faced John McCain, a decorated Vietnam War veteran and former prisoner of war.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL DATABASES

Access to vast databases on American voters made these Web tools even more powerful. Both the Democratic and Republican parties have long spent considerable resources establishing very accurate lists of the names of every voter in the United States, together with any data that had been collected on the voter (mainly during phone interviews by various campaign volunteers over the years). Such information includes what political party a person



© AP Images/David Lienemann

While engaging with a live audience in Iowa during the campaign, Obama also takes questions from online viewers.

prefers, whether they are strong supporters or only leaning in that direction, and what issues are of particular interest to them.

Each party maintains its own databases, and the Republicans traditionally have been more disciplined and organized about maintaining theirs at the national level. But between 2006 and 2008, the Democratic database was improved by a company named Voter Activation Network (VAN) in Somerville, Massachusetts. VAN, under contract to the Democratic National Committee, linked together databases from the 50 U.S. states and built simple ways for supporters to access the data in limited, controlled ways via the Web. MyBO, as well as the Web sites of other Democratic candidates in other races, linked with this newly improved database in very powerful ways.

As a result, once Barack Obama became the Democratic Party nominee, any average volunteer — whether they were logging on to MyBO, linking from the Web sites of other Democratic candidates, or linking from the Democratic National Committee's own Web site —

could click a button to download small batches of voters' names and telephone numbers from the VAN database. Along with this list came a script for querying the voters about their views and an online form for recording their responses.

Millions of such calls were made by average supporters during the primary campaign. In addition, the MyBO tools allowed the volunteers to download voter registration forms — customized for each American state, as needed — to people on the database known to be unregistered but a likely Obama supporter based on demographic information.

The Obama campaign's use of the database with such efficiency and at such a huge scale during the fast-moving presidential primary process had helped him to win the Democratic Party nomination. Such voter contacts — enabled through Web tools — were made at a huge scale also in the November general election, when Barack Obama faced John McCain. But the strategy changed as needed. For example, in just the final four days of the

campaign, volunteers on MyBO made 3 million calls to voters, mainly to make sure people who were already registered to vote and already favored Obama actually got out of the house and voted.

Jascha Franklin-Hodge, the co-founder and chief technology officer of Blue State Digital, says that the scale of all of these operations exceeded anything done in any other campaign. Obama's e-campaign included not only MyBO, but also the powerful leveraging of other new-media tools, from text messaging to YouTube videos. People spent 14 million hours watching campaign-related Obama videos on YouTube, 50 million views in all. And Obama had more than 3.4 million Facebook supporters, six times McCain's number.

A CONTINUING STRATEGY

How will President Barack Obama use all of these resources now that he has taken office? Thanks to all of the voter calls made by Web-based volunteers, the Democratic Party now possesses 10 times more data on U.S. voters than it did just four years ago. This information can, in turn, be used not only in future elections to further improve how supporters are organized around specific issues to bring about change, but also, potentially, help engage ordinary Americans in fighting for new government policies.

However, it's not yet clear to what extent the Democratic Party and Obama campaign organizations outside the White House will leverage the voter database or Obama's 13-million-member e-mail list to help enact his agenda. The day after he won the election, Obama's transition team launched a new Web site, <http://www.change.gov>. Through this site, his transition team solicited public comment on policy matters and broadcast videos of his nominees for cabinet posts, providing answers to the comments through YouTube. The transition team also posted the names and position papers of groups lobbying the team and launched an "Open for Questions" feature in which visitors could write and vote on questions for the Obama administration: In one December week, roughly

20,000 people posed 10,000 questions and cast one million votes on them.

But on inauguration day (January 20), the administration shut down www.change.gov and launched the new version of the presidential site, www.whitehouse.gov. As of late January, it had few interactive features, but it did start posting the text of Obama's executive orders and included a promise that any nonemergency legislation would be posted on the site for five days, together with a feature for the public to add comments, before President Obama signed the legislation into law. While it's not yet known what additional features the administration might add, Obama's campaign promised to use the Web to furnish easily searchable files on government spending and other activities and to Webcast more public meetings. And Obama has already established the YouTube video address, in addition to the decades-old White House tradition of a weekly radio address.

It is unlikely that any future political campaign — or other widespread campaign for social change or other cause — will ignore the lessons of 2008. The Republicans can be expected to respond strongly in the 2010 congressional elections and the 2012 congressional and presidential elections.

Barack Obama's victory showed that Web-based organizing can effectively marshal ordinary people into a force that rivals traditional institutions and power centers. Indeed, this lesson is being noted around the world. Blue State Digital has opened a London office to expand operations, and VAN has been fielding many calls from overseas. Similar moves are likely by Republican-leaning Web and database vendors.

Clearly, politics will never be the same. Back in 1992, a campaign manager used to remind Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton about the campaign's most important theme: "It's the economy, stupid." Now, to quote Joe Trippi, a longtime Democratic campaign operative: "It's the network, stupid." ■

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Harnessing the Power of Protest

Clay Shirky



Using communication tools, Los Angeles students organized a surprise demonstration 30,000 strong.

© AP Images/Ric Francis

Simple new telecommunications tools are removing obstacles to collective action by ordinary people, and thus changing the world.

Clay Shirky consults and writes about the social and economic effects of Internet technologies and teaches at New York University. His most recent book is Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations.

On March 27, 2006, a Monday, secondary school students in Los Angeles, California, surprised teachers and administrators by staging a school walkout in protest of HR4437, a bill before the U.S. Congress proposing a crackdown on illegal immigrants. This was no ordinary walkout, though, because tens of thousands of students participated, from schools all across the city. The students walking out, a largely Hispanic population, had been inspired to act by a protest by adults in their community that had taken place just two days

before. So many students walked out of their schools and down to City Hall that they blocked traffic as they went, creating a very visible and public display for their cause.

The protest had several remarkable aspects, starting with size — tens of thousands of people all taking coordinated political action. Coordinating such a thing at multiple geographic sites at the same time is hard. Getting secondary school students to do so, when most of them are too young to vote, is harder. And involving immigrants, who may never be able to vote, is harder still. Being able to do so without the school administration knowing is nothing short of astonishing — keeping a secret among 30,000 people has never been trivial. And doing it all in 48 hours should have been impossible, would have been impossible, in fact, even a year before.

What made a rapid, secret, huge protest happen was the adoption of new communication tools, especially MySpace (the interactive social-networking Web site) and SMS (text messages sent via the phone). Armed with these tools, students could coordinate with one another, not just

person to person but in groups. Almost as critically, the messages they exchanged went to the people who mattered — the other students — without reaching the school administrators.

Making the school protest possible, though, was not the same as making it happen. What made it happen was real political feeling: The students had a message they wanted to express, together and in public. MySpace and texting amplified that message by giving the messengers abilities they hadn't had before, but the message itself, a demand for political inclusion in making immigration policy, was independent of the tools.

Though some of the early utopianism around new communications tools suggested we were heading into some sort of post-hierarchical paradise, that's not what is happening now, and it's not what is going to happen. None of the absolute advantages of large-scale and professional media have disappeared. Instead, what has happened is that most of the relative advantages of those institutions have disappeared — relative, that is, to the media controlled directly by the citizens.

The story here is the new ability of uncoordinated groups to achieve the kind of goals such groups have always shared. Human beings are social creatures, not occasionally or by accident, but always, and society isn't just the product of its individual members; it's the product of its constituent groups as well. Whenever you improve a group's ability to communicate with one another, you change the things they are able to accomplish together.

SPEAKING IS PUBLISHING

You can see those changes in the altered relationship between citizens and the media: The old saying that freedom of the press exists only for those who own a press points to the significance of the Internet and mobile phones. In the digital realm, to speak is to publish, and to publish online is to open the possibility of connecting with others. With the arrival of a medium where interpersonal communication, public broadcasting, and social coordination shade into one another, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association now do so as well.

With this blending of conversational, broadcast, and social elements into one medium, we have entered a world where every piece of digital media is a latent community: The people interested in any given bit of writing, picture, or video might well be interested in conversing with one

another as well. Being able to synchronize groups via social media is adding a new feature to traditional media; it is becoming not only a source of information, but also a site of coordination. In the case of the Los Angeles walkout, MySpace provided a place for students to publish information about HR4437 (a broadcast function), to talk to one another directly about the bill (a communications function), and to propose a course of communal action (a coordination function), all in one arena.

To put it in military terms, digital media can create "shared awareness," the sense in a group not only that each member understands what is going on, but also that the understanding is similar among all, and, critically, each member understands this as well. Shared awareness is a useful precursor to coordinated action, and the ability to create shared awareness improves with real-time media and with mobile media.

A recent application that improves shared awareness using both fast and mobile messages is Twitter, the service that broadcasts short messages from a phone or personal computer to any of your friends who have subscribed to your Twitter "feed." Though Twitter can be used for any sort of short message, Twitter itself proposes that you use Twitter to answer the question "What are you doing now?"

As a result, much of the content on Twitter at any given moment is inane. On a random Thursday afternoon, here's a random sample of twittering:

PaulDizmag: Moving appliances from one rental to another.

radiopalmwine: King Sunny Ade — Dance, Dance, Dance

Lisanae: im having a really bad day.

Patorama: It is seemingly impossible to buy a single Faber-Castell black brush pen online. I can buy a pack of 10 tho. I guess I'll have extras.

Many of the public posts have this sort of quality — grooving to King Sunny Ade, moving appliances, generically bad days — where the publicly available content is not likely to interest most users. Just because much of the content is banal, though, doesn't mean all of it is, as with this Twitter feed from Cairo in 2007 (with message times appended):

Alaa: Going to doky prosecutor judge murad accused me and manal of libel (10:11 a.m. April 04)



© Image Source/Corbis

Improved communication capability can lead to more accomplishment.

Alaa: Waiting for prosecutors decision might actually spend the night in custody (01:57 p.m. April 04)

Alaa: We are going to dokky police station (03:31 p.m. April 04)

Alaa: In police station no senior officers present so we are in limbo (04:29 p.m. April 04)

Alaa: We will not be released from giza security will have to go back to dokki station (07:59 p.m. April 04)

Alaa: On our way back to police station (10:25 p.m. April 04)

Alaa: We are free (11:22 p.m. April 04)

Alaa, or Alaa Abd El Fattah, is an Egyptian programmer, democracy activist, and blogger living in Cairo. Here, he is documenting his arrest, with his wife, Manal, in El Dokky, a Cairo neighborhood, an episode that ended 12 hours later with their release. His arrest was ordered by Abdel Fatah Murad, an Egyptian judge attempting to have dozens of Web sites blocked in Egypt on the grounds that the sites “insult the Quran, God, the president, and the country.” When Egyptian pro-democracy bloggers started covering the proposed censorship, Murad added their sites to the list he was attempting to ban.

TIPPING THE BALANCE

What does a service like Twitter, whose public face is so banal, offer El Fattah and other Egyptian activists? As El Fattah describes Twitter, “We use it to keep a tight network of activists informed about security action

in protests. The activists would then use Twitter to coordinate a reaction.” Because pro-democracy activists are watched so carefully, Twitter allows them a combination of real-time and group coordination that helps tip the balance of action in their favor.

One early use of Twitter had El Fattah and a dozen or so of his colleagues coordinating movements to surround a car in which their friend Malek was being held by the police, to prevent it and him from being towed away. Knowing they were being monitored, they then sent messages suggesting that there were many more of them coming. The police sent reinforcements, surrounding and thus immobilizing the car themselves. This kept Malek in place until the press and members of Parliament arrived. The threat of bad publicity led to Malek’s release, an outcome that would have been hard to coordinate without Twitter.

The power to coordinate otherwise dispersed groups will continue to improve: New social tools are still being invented. However minor they may seem, any tool that improves shared awareness or group coordination can be pressed into service for political means because the freedom to act in a group is inherently political. What the increasingly social and real-time uses of text messaging from China to Nigeria shows us is that we adopt those tools that amplify our capabilities, and we modify our tools to improve that amplification.

Social tools aren’t creating collective action; they are merely removing the obstacles to it. Those obstacles have been so significant and pervasive, however, that as they are being removed, the world is becoming a different place. This is why many of the significant changes are based not on the fanciest, newest bits of technology, but on simple, easy-to-use tools such as e-mail, mobile phones, and Web sites. Those are the tools most people have access to and, critically, are comfortable using in their daily lives. Revolution doesn’t happen when society adopts new technologies; it happens when society adopts new behaviors. ■

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Science Suggesting Solutions

Will War Ever End?

John Horgan



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Anthropologists have found correlations between war and environmental stresses such as drought.

Warfare is not part of the natural condition of man. Civilization promotes less violent ways of effecting change.

John Horgan is a science journalist and director of the Center for Science Writings at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New York. His books include The End of Science, The Undiscovered Mind, and Rational Mysticism.

Of all the forms that human violence takes, war — organized, lethal violence between two or more groups — is the most profoundly destructive. Throughout human history, visionaries as diverse as Immanuel Kant and Martin Luther King Jr. have prophesied the end of war or the threat thereof as a means of resolving disputes between nations.

Today, however, most people have come to accept war and militarism as inevitable, according to surveys I have conducted over the past few years. When asked “will humans ever stop fighting wars?” more than 90 percent

of the students at my university answered “no.” Asked to justify this view, many students responded that war is “in our genes.”

Recent research on warfare and aggression seems, at first glance, to support this fatalistic conclusion. The anthropologist Lawrence Keeley of the University of Illinois estimates that more than 90 percent of pre-state, tribal societies engaged in at least occasional warfare, and many fought constantly. Tribal combat usually involved skirmishes and ambushes rather than pitched battles, but over time the fighting could produce mortality rates as high as 50 percent. These findings, Keeley contends, demolish the claim of the 18th-century French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau that, prior to civilization, humans were “noble savages” living in harmony with each other and with nature.

Some scientists trace warfare all the way back to the common ancestor we shared with chimpanzees, our closest genetic relatives. Beginning in the mid-1970s, researchers



Legal institutions, such as this mobile court in the Philippines, have reduced the risk of violence.

in Africa have observed male chimpanzees from the same troop banding together to patrol their territory; if they encounter a chimp from a different troop, the raiders beat him, often to death.

Mortality rates from intergroup violence among chimpanzees, the Harvard University anthropologist Richard Wrangham reports, are roughly comparable to rates observed among human hunter-gatherers. “Chimpanzee-like violence preceded and paved the way for human war,” Wrangham asserts, “making modern humans the dazed survivors of a continuous, five-million-year habit of lethal aggression.”

Wrangham contends that natural selection has favored male primates, including humans, predisposed to violent aggression. As evidence, he cites studies of the Yanomamo, a polygamous tribe that dwells in the Amazonian rain forest. Yanomamo men from different villages often engage in lethal raids and counterraids. The University of

California anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, who has observed the Yanomamo for decades, found that male killers on average had twice as many wives and three times as many children as males who never killed.

But Chagnon vehemently rejects the notion that Yanomamo warriors are compelled to fight by their aggressive instincts. Truly compulsive killers, Chagnon explains, quickly get killed themselves rather than living long enough to have many wives and children.

Successful Yanomamo warriors, Chagnon says, are usually quite controlled and calculating; they fight because that is how a male advances in their society. Moreover, many Yanomamo men have confessed to Chagnon that they loathe war and wish it could be abolished from their culture — and, in fact, rates of violence have dropped dramatically in recent decades as Yanomamo villages have accepted the laws and mores of the outside world.

NOT HUMAN NATURE

Indeed, the on-again, off-again pattern of warfare leads many researchers to reject the notion that war is an inevitable consequence of human nature. “If war is deeply rooted in our biology, then it’s going to be there all the time,” the anthropologist Jonathan Haas at the Field Museum in Chicago argues. “And it’s just not.” War, Haas adds, is certainly not innate in the same sense as language, which has been exhibited by all known human societies at all times.

The anthropologists Carol and Melvin Ember also assert that biological theories cannot explain patterns of warfare among either pre-state or state societies. The Embers oversee Yale University’s Human Relations Area Files, a database of information on some 360 cultures past and present. Although more than 90 percent of these societies have engaged in warfare at least once, some societies fight constantly and others rarely. The Embers have found correlations between rates of warfare and environmental factors, notably droughts, floods, and other natural disasters that provoke fears of scarcity.

The root cause of warfare, the Harvard archaeologist Steven LeBlanc concurs, is the Malthusian struggle for food and other resources. “Since the beginning of time,” he says, “humans have been unable to live in ecological balance. No matter where we happen to live on Earth, we eventually outstrip the environment. This has always led to competition as a means of survival, and warfare has been the inevitable consequence of our ecological-demographic propensities.” Two keys to avoiding conflict in the future, he believes, are controlling population growth and finding cheap alternatives to fossil fuels.

Studies of nonhuman primates have also revealed the importance of environmental and cultural factors. Frans de Waal, professor of primate behavior at Emory University, has shown that rhesus monkeys, which ordinarily seem intractably aggressive, are much less belligerent when raised by mild-mannered stump-tail monkeys. De

Waal has also reduced conflicts among monkeys and apes by increasing their interdependence — by forcing them to cooperate to obtain food, for example — and ensuring their equal access to food.

Applying these lessons to humans, de Waal sees promise in alliances such as the European Union, which promote trade and travel and hence interdependence. “Foster economic ties, and the reason for warfare, which is usually resources, will probably dissipate,” he says.

Perhaps the most hopeful and surprising statistic to emerge from modern war research is that humanity as a whole has become much less warlike than it used to be. World Wars I and II and all the other horrific conflicts of the 20th century resulted in the deaths of less than 3 percent of the global population. That is an order of magnitude less than the rate of violent death for males in the average primitive society, whose weapons consisted only of clubs and spears rather than machine guns and bombs.

If war is defined as an armed conflict leading to at least 1,000 deaths per year, there have been relatively few international wars over the past half-century, and civil wars have declined sharply since peaking in the early 1990s.

Most conflicts now consist of guerilla wars, insurgencies, and terrorism — or what the political

scientist John Mueller of Ohio State University calls the “remnants of war.” Mueller rejects biological explanations for the trend, since “testosterone levels seem to be as high as ever.” Noting that democracies rarely if ever wage war against each other, Mueller attributes the decline of warfare since World War II at least in part to a surge in the number of democracies around the world.

MORE CIVILIZATION

The Harvard University psychologist Steven Pinker identifies several other possible reasons for the recent decline of warfare and other forms of violence. First, the creation of stable states with effective legal systems and



Educating girls is believed to lead to population stability and less social unrest.

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police forces has eliminated the Hobbesian anarchy of all against all. Second, our increased life expectancies make us less willing to risk our lives by engaging in violence. Third, as a result of globalization and communications, we have become increasingly interdependent on — and empathetic toward — others outside of our immediate tribes. Although humanity can “easily backslide into war,” Pinker concludes, “the forces of modernity are making things better and better.”

In short, many lines of research contradict the myth that war is a constant of the human condition. These studies also suggest that — contrary to the myth of the peaceful, noble savage — civilization has not created the problem of warfare; it is helping us solve it. We need more civilization, not less, if we wish to eradicate war.

Civilization has given us legal institutions that resolve disputes by establishing laws and negotiating agreements and enforcing them. These institutions, which range from local courts to the United Nations, have vastly reduced the risk of violence both within and between nations. Obviously, our institutions are far from perfect. Nations around the world still maintain huge arsenals, including weapons of mass destruction, and armed conflicts still ravage many regions. So what should we do to promote peace, in addition to the proposals mentioned above?

The anthropologist Melvin Konner of Emory University proposes female education as another key to reducing conflict. Many studies, he notes, have demonstrated that an increase in the education of females leads to a decrease in birth rates. The result is a stabilized population, which decreases demands on governmental and medical services and depletion of natural resources, and hence the likelihood of social unrest.

A lower birth rate also reduces what some demographers call “bare branches” — unmarried, unemployed young men, who are associated with higher

rates of violent conflict both within and between nations. “Education of girls is by far the best investment you can make in a developing country,” Konner says.

ACCEPTING PEACE

Obviously, ending war will not be easy. War, it seems fair to say, is overdetermined; that is, it can spring from many different causes. Peace, if it is to be permanent, must be overdetermined too.

Scientists can help promote peace in two ways: first, by publicly rejecting the notion that warfare is inevitable; and second, by doing more intensive research on the causes of war and peace. The short-term goal of this research would be finding ways to reduce conflict in the world today, wherever it might occur. The long-term goal would be to identify ways for humanity to achieve permanent disarmament: the elimination of armies, arms, and arms industries.

Global disarmament seems a remote possibility now. But can we really accept armies and armaments, including weapons of mass destruction, as permanent features of civilization? As recently as the late 1980s, global nuclear war still seemed like a distinct possibility. Then, incredibly, the Soviet Union dissolved and the Cold War ended peacefully. Apartheid also ended in South Africa without significant violence, and human rights have advanced elsewhere around the world. If the capacity for war is in our genes, as many seem to fear these days, so are the capacity — and the desire — for peace. ■

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The Prisoner's Dilemma and Other Opportunities

David P. Barash

Game theory suggests that, although it is not at all simple to accomplish, cooperation can often be shown to be preferable to conflict.

David P. Barash is professor of psychology at the University of Washington and co-author of Peace and Conflict Studies, among many other books.

The problem seems simple enough: Why don't people cooperate? Or at least, why don't they cooperate more than they currently do? After all, if I helped you and in return you helped me, wouldn't both of us be better off? Similarly, wouldn't everyone benefit if we all followed the path of nonviolence? In short, what is so difficult about the question famously posed by U.S. motorist Rodney King after he had been beaten by police in Los Angeles: Why can't we all just get along? Nonviolently.

The answer turns out to be more complex than one might think. Moreover, a series of decision-making techniques known as game theory helps illuminate both the problems — including the problem of violence versus nonviolence — and some strategies for solving them.

Game theory, in brief, is a way of looking at situations involving, in the simplest case, two sides (or “players”), with “payoffs” or “outcomes” determined not merely by what a given player does, but by the interaction of both sides involved. Without this interaction component, such “games” wouldn't be very difficult: Each player would simply do whatever it takes to get the best outcome for himself or herself, regardless of the other player. For example, if it is raining, the correct “move” may be to carry an umbrella, regardless of what the other does. The weather is unlikely to be influenced by anyone's behavior; each is therefore free to follow his or her inclinations, without regard to the other's course of action.

On the other hand, imagine that two people discover, say, a small pile of money. They will likely be best served by taking the other into account: for example, dividing the loot rather than each trying to monopolize the payoff

and possibly fighting over it as a result. It is when payoffs are determined not just by what individual A does, but also by what B does simultaneously, that game theory is called for.

Unfortunately, however, such decisions are often less straightforward than merely splitting the difference, and, worse yet, they frequently provide occasions for noncooperation, especially when cooperation by one player renders him vulnerable to being exploited by the other. Such situations, of course, are often encountered by individuals and social groups seeking to prevent conflict and avoid violence.

In short, there is an ever-present risk that, by choosing cooperation over competition, nonviolent practitioners risk losing out to those who are more aggressive and violence prone. Imagine, for example, that in the case of two people discovering a pile of money, one elects to pull out a gun and claim the money as his, while the other is committed to nonviolence. The inevitable result would appear to be that the violent participant is rewarded for his behavior (he gets the money), while the nonviolent one is left empty-handed. Or as Machiavelli famously put it, “A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among those who are not good.”

NONVIOLENT SOLUTIONS

But there is hope, as well: Game theory not only helps us understand the problem, but also suggests and supports nonviolent solutions.

The Prisoner's Dilemma, derived from game theory, is a model for the evolution of cooperation versus competition more generally. Like most models, it is overly simple, but it helps clarify one's thinking.

Assume that two individuals — or groups, or even states — both have the choice of being either nonviolent or violent. (Theorists generalize these options to “cooperate” versus “defect” or “nice” versus “nasty,” including such international matters as arms races

and the imposition of trade barriers.) If both parties choose nonviolence, each receives a reward for doing so: peacefully resolving their dispute or, in the case of found money, obtaining a share without fighting. If both choose violence, each receives a different payoff: the punishment of possible injury. But if one defects and the other cooperates, the violent defector gets what is called the temptation to defect (all the money in this example), and the one who cooperates (who behaves nonviolently while the other chooses violence) receives the sucker's payoff: no money in this example.

To understand what happens next, imagine yourself inside the head of either player: "The other fellow could either cooperate with me (be nonviolent) or defect. If the former, then my best move is to threaten violence because then I would get the highest payoff of all while he — a sucker — would get nothing. On the other hand, he might choose to defect and threaten violence, in which case my best move — once again — is to do the same, because even though I get the punishment of a possible fight, which admittedly is a poor payoff, at least it's better than ending up a sucker and losing out altogether."

The result of this strict logic is that each side is inclined to possibly violent defection, which presents a troubling dilemma indeed because, by doing so, each gets a punishment (in the case of individuals, a fight, or in the case of nations, perhaps a debilitating arms race or trade war) when the best mutual payoff would have been the shared reward for cooperation and nonviolence.

The Prisoner's Dilemma is a useful way of modeling this dilemma, thinking that one must be nasty for fear that anyone who is nice is at the mercy of others who persevere in being nasty (recall Machiavelli).

On the other hand, it isn't the only way of looking at such situations. For example, when it comes to violence and nonviolence, a more appropriate model may well be the so-called game of Chicken, which resembles Prisoner's Dilemma except that here, punishment is the worst payoff of all: The cost of mutual fighting — or even threatening to fight — exceeds the cost of being a sucker and avoiding conflict altogether. Chicken is a "game" in which two drivers drive toward each other on a collision course, with each seeking to induce the other to swerve. The one who swerves — equivalent to cooperating in Prisoner's Dilemma — is considered to be a "chicken" (slang for coward), whereas the one who goes straight — equivalent to defecting in Prisoner's Dilemma — wins. The problem, however, is that if each player is determined to defect, and

thus to win at the other's expense, the result is that both lose!

REPEATED ROUNDS

Simplified game theory models also assume that there is only one possible payoff and that any interaction is a one-time affair. But in reality, individuals and groups often interact repeatedly, and they can vary their behavior depending on what happened the previous time. Both sides therefore have a genuine interest in generating a sequence of nonviolent, cooperative interactions because, whether Prisoner's Dilemma or a game of Chicken, the reward of nonviolent cooperation is always higher than the punishment of mutual violence. Therefore, such outcomes can indeed yield the highest payoff for everyone concerned.

Interestingly, even in isolated, one-time interactions, when a strictly rational calculation suggests that competitive defection is the "logical" response, most people are inclined to attempt cooperation, especially when they understand that the interaction in question will likely be repeated. Continued interactions offer not only the potential downside of repeated punishments for mutual defection (violence), but also the prospect of enjoying continuing rewards from shared cooperation (nonviolence).

Mathematical and computer-based simulations have shown, for example, that a simple strategy of tit-for-tat can generate the highest payoff of all, even in a classic Prisoner's Dilemma situation. Such a strategy involves initial cooperation, after which each player merely repeats the move employed by the other in the previous round. Thus, cooperation by player A engenders cooperation by player B indefinitely — as a result of which, both obtain the repeated reward of nonviolent cooperation. By the same token, defection by A produces defection by B, thereby protecting B from being suckered more than once and, in the process, discouraging A from defecting in the first place.

Mohandas Gandhi did not condone tit-for-tat retaliation, but he strongly emphasized that *satyagraha* — his term for active nonviolence — must be distinguished from passive acquiescence or the desire to avoid conflict at any price. He was also quite clear that by their actions, *satyagrahis* eventually modify the behavior of would-be defectors, that by their example and willingness to accept suffering (to be occasional suckers, in game theory

terminology), they can do something that game theorists do not usually consider: change the behavior of the other party by appealing to his or her higher nature.

When a victim responds to violence with yet more violence, he or she is behaving in a manner that is predictable, perhaps even instinctive, which tends to reinforce the aggression of the original attacker and even, in a way, to vindicate the original violence, at least in the attacker's mind. Since the victim is so violent, presumably he or she deserved it! Moreover, there is a widespread expectation of countervailing power analogous in the social sphere to Newton's Third Law, which states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Thus, if A hits B and then B hits back, this nearly always encourages A to strike yet again. Gandhi was not fond of the biblical injunction "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," pointing out that if we all behaved that way, soon the whole world would be blind and toothless.

Instead, if B responds with nonviolence, this response not only breaks the chain of anger and hatred (analogous to the Hindu chain of birth and rebirth), but also puts A in an unexpected position. "I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword," wrote Gandhi, "not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance." Such resistance is neither easy nor likely to be painless, but game theory, as well as the practical experience of Gandhi in South Africa and India and of Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists in the United States, confirms that it can be spectacularly successful.

The ancient Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero, in *Letters to His Friends*, asked, "What can be done against force, without force?" Students of nonviolence would answer, "plenty." Moreover, they would question whether anything effective, lasting, or worthwhile can be done against force, with force. After all, as we have seen, mutual recourse to violence readily leads to what game theorists identify as the punishment of mutual defection, to the detriment of all. American civil rights leader King, who, like Gandhi, was also intensely practical and result oriented, wrote that "returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

In summary, game theory helps illuminate the limits to cooperation, revealing why "getting along" isn't as simple — or even as natural — as many would wish. But at the same time, it shows that human beings aren't necessarily doomed to a Hobbesian world of endless, punishing defection and painful competition if they can be persuaded to take a wider view of their situation and, thus, their opportunities. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

A Few People Making It Happen

Howard Cincotta



Wangari Maathai, right, plants a tree in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2006 with Barack Obama.

There is no single formula for implementing meaningful social change in a world of such daunting complexity and diversity. Yet this world offers enormous opportunities to those with vision and dedication to reach unprecedented numbers of people and build powerful programs based on the principles of nonviolence, progress, and hope. Here are seven individuals who demonstrate how such change can be accomplished.

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How does someone decide to change the world — without force or coercion — and then actually accomplish it?

The task is indeed difficult. How could it be otherwise? Yet it is being done every day by individuals, famous and obscure, through a potent combination of conviction, vision, and endless hard work. Their examples inspire hundreds of thousands of others to join them in the quest for a better world, whether campaigning for environmental justice, waging peace, protecting human

rights, ending poverty, or defending freedom of expression.

The seven people profiled here are dissimilar in their backgrounds, careers, and the issues to which they have chosen to devote themselves. But they all share a profound bond: As exemplars of idealism, pragmatism, and dedication, they have empowered people from equally dissimilar backgrounds to unite with them in working to change our world for the better.

WANGARI MAATHAI: TREES OF PEACE

Before Kenyan Wangari Maathai launched her community-based Green Belt Movement to plant trees and protect biodiversity — becoming the

first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize — few people equated environmental degradation with issues of human rights and democracy. No longer.

In announcing the award in 2004, the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee said, “Peace on Earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment.”

Throughout her career, Maathai has shown that the movement to protect biodiversity and ensure sustainable development — in Kenya and around the world — is inextricably tied to the advance of democracy, human rights, and the alleviation of poverty. She has demonstrated how small communities and poor people can bring significant change in their lives through peaceful, nonviolent means.

“Through the Green Belt Movement, thousands of ordinary citizens were mobilized and empowered to take action and effect change,” Maathai said in her December 2004 Nobel address. “They learned to overcome fear and a sense of helplessness and moved to defend democratic rights.”

Maathai didn't necessarily see these connections when she started her work. In the beginning, planting trees was simply a direct way of meeting the needs of rural women — the primary caretakers of their families — for firewood, extra income, prevention of erosion, clean drinking water, and better crop yields.

But there was another, equally important, and long-term result, according to Maathai. These women, she says, "are often the first to become aware of environmental damage as resources become scarce and incapable of sustaining their families."

In her memoir, *Unbowed*, Maathai remembers a childhood landscape that was lush and fertile. She writes, "The seasons were so regular that you could almost predict that the long, monsoon rains would start falling in mid-March."

As the decades passed, however, she witnessed the seasons becoming unpredictable and the land devastated through population growth and heedless exploitation by often-corrupt governments unresponsive to the needs of both poor people and the natural world.

More than 40 million tree plantings later, including the establishment of a Pan-African Green Belt Network, Maathai and her movement have also learned how environmental concerns are linked to broader issues of good governance and protection of human rights.

Maathai, who earned degrees from colleges in the United States and a doctorate from the University of Nairobi, found herself arrested, imprisoned, and beaten when her grassroots campaign took on endemic corruption in the government — especially over plans to build an office tower in the middle of Nairobi's Uhuru Park.

But she prevailed. Maathai was elected to Kenya's parliament in 2002, and she now serves as the assistant minister for environment, natural resources, and wildlife.

In her Nobel address, Maathai said that although the Green Belt Movement didn't initially address political issues, "It soon became clear that responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space. Therefore, the tree became a symbol for the democratic struggle in Kenya. ... In time, the tree also became a symbol for peace and conflict resolution."

SHIRIN EBADI: FAITH IN FREEDOM

Whether they agree or disagree with her, anyone who has heard Shirin Ebadi, winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize, can have little doubt about the uncompromising dedication she brings to the cause of human rights and political freedom.

"Her display of energy and emotion made each word delivered across the room like the beat of the drum



Shirin Ebadi

© AP Images/Vahid Salemi

that resonates long after the drummer has stopped," an Iranian-Canadian lawyer commented on Iranica.com after an Ebadi speech in Toronto.

In its announcement, the Nobel Committee said of Ebadi, "As a lawyer, judge, lecturer, writer, and activist, she has spoken out clearly and strongly in her country, Iran, and far beyond its borders. She has stood up as a sound professional, a courageous person, and has never heeded the threats to her own safety."

Ebadi, born in 1947, graduated from Tehran University, where she later earned a doctorate in law while working her way up in the Department of Justice. She became Iran's first female judge as head of the Tehran city court. Ebadi was forced to resign after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which viewed women as unsuitable for such positions. The authorities made her a clerk in the very court where she had presided.

Ebadi resigned to establish a private law practice and write extensively on a wide range of legal issues, notably those pertaining to women, children, and family law. She also began taking difficult, potentially dangerous cases involving suppression of free speech, as well as the harassment and even murder of reformist figures by elements linked to the government's security services.

“Her refusal to be silenced and her willingness to take on politically sensitive cases have won the admiration of human rights groups across the world,” commented a Middle Eastern analyst with the British Broadcasting Service.

Despite threats and harassment from the government, Ebadi’s multifaceted campaign for human rights, especially those of women and children, continues to reverberate throughout Iran and the world. At home, she helped found the Association for Support of Children’s Rights in 1995 and the Human Rights Defense Center in 2001. She continues to write and travel extensively, lecturing on social justice and the role of women in Islam in Europe, the United States, and many other countries.

Ebadi has denounced outside intervention in the affairs of Iran and other nations — “I maintain that nothing useful and lasting can emerge from violence” — while also insisting on the universality of the ideals of freedom and democracy, especially for women. In her memoir, *Iran Awakening*, she observed how the old regime mandated the forced unveiling of women and the new revolutionary government demanded that women again take up the veil. “Reza Shah was the first, but not the last Iranian ruler to act out a political agenda on the frontier of women’s bodies.”

In 2006, Ebadi joined other Nobel laureates to establish the Women’s Nobel Initiative “to bring together our extraordinary experiences in a united effort for peace with justice and equality.” Two years later the organization denounced the Iranian government’s renewed campaign of harassment and intimidation against Ebadi and her human rights organization.

Ebadi told the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran in January 2009, “Regardless of all pressures, I am not leaving Iran and I am not ceasing my human rights activities. I will continue on the same path.”

In *Iran Awakening* Ebadi wrote, “In the last 23 years, from the day I was stripped of my judgeship ... I have repeated one refrain: An interpretation of Islam that is in harmony with equality and democracy is an authentic expression of faith. It is not religion that binds women, but the selective dictates of those who wish them cloistered. That belief, along with the conviction that change in Iran must come peacefully and from within, has underpinned my work.”

JODY WILLIAMS: LANDMINES AND NETWORKS

Two questions continue to be asked of Jody Williams, winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize along with her organization, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). Is Williams’s most enduring accomplishment the international treaty outlawing



Jody Williams

© AP Images/Alex Brandon

antipersonnel landmines? Or is it the model for a global network of dedicated citizens that she helped pioneer — one that has empowered a new generation of organizations committed to nonviolent social change?

Perhaps there can be no clear answer because these achievements are so completely interconnected. What is clear, however, is that Williams and ICBL conducted one of today’s most successful international peace initiatives, and did it in an unbelievably short time.

The power of fast, flexible networks is a truism in today’s broadband Internet era. Williams and the ICBL were among the first to demonstrate just how effective such dispersed global networks could be.

By the 1980s, groups dealing with humanitarian relief, development, and medical care began to recognize that vast swaths of territory — from the Balkans and the Middle East to Africa and Southeast Asia — were

contaminated and rendered unusable by millions of landmines and explosive ordnance that continued to destroy lives long after the conflicts that led to their deployment had ended.

“The landmine is eternally prepared to take victims,” Williams said in her Nobel address. “It is the perfect soldier, the eternal ‘sentry.’ The war ends, the landmine goes on killing.”

Six nongovernmental organizations founded the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1992. They were shrewd, persistent — and lucky.

First, they deliberately kept the ICBL a loose coalition of independent groups, without a central office or hierarchy. Instead, they built a powerful communications network that relied on the cutting-edge technology of the time: telephone, fax, and — only in the campaign’s final year — e-mail. Next, the ICBL coalition insisted on conducting exhaustive field research so that the facts and figures they cited were as authoritative as possible. Williams herself is the co-author of a detailed study of the economic and social consequences of large numbers of landmines in four countries.

The ICBL’s timing was also fortunate. The end of the Cold War allowed nations to address issues of peace and security from fresh perspectives and empowered citizen groups to demand international action in partnership with government — and not as either antagonists or subordinates.

The ICBL, Williams later wrote, “galvanized world opinion against antipersonnel landmines to such a degree that within five years a clear and simple ban treaty had been negotiated. Signed by 122 nations in December 1997, the treaty became binding international law more quickly than any such agreement in history. The treaty has, for the first time, comprehensively prohibited a widely used conventional weapon.”

Although not a party to the treaty, the United States remains the world’s largest donor to humanitarian demining and has banned all “persistent” antipersonnel mines. The United States retains only devices rendered inert after a period measured in hours or days, not years.

The ICBL has hardly rested on its remarkable achievement. Under the watchful eyes of its *Landmine Monitor Report*, which measures compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty, nations have destroyed more than 42 million stockpiled mines, 500,000 alone in 2007. Demining programs painstakingly cleared 122 square kilometers in 2007, according to the report, and mine-related casualties continue to fall year by year.

In an essay on the impact of the Nobel Prize, Williams, now a professor at the University of Houston’s Graduate School of Social Work, wrote, “Our model for change, while under attack at times, continues to be an inspiration to people all over the world who believe that, if we work together — civil society and government — we can create a world where human security forms the basis for global security, which in turn will give us the peace, justice, and equality that each and every human being deserves.”

GEOFFREY CANADA: A CHILDREN’S CONVEYOR BELT

Geoffrey Canada is one of the lucky ones: an African-American kid growing up in a grim New York City neighborhood who escaped its violence, poverty, and derelict schools to earn a master’s degree in education from Harvard University. But Canada didn’t forget his roots; he immediately went to work in New York’s Harlem neighborhood as an educator and child advocate.

Canada had not only made it out himself, but also was now helping hundreds of other poor, at-risk, inner-city children. Yet that wasn’t enough, he decided.

A Chicago Public Radio program called *This American Life* describes how, by the 1980s, Canada realized that saving just a few children wasn’t going to end



Geoffrey Canada

Evan Kalka

generational poverty in Harlem or anywhere else; his organization needed to try and save just about everyone.

“In order to truly make a difference,” he said, “we were going to have to think really big. We were going to have to work with children in the thousands, going to ten thousands. And we were going to have to work with these children from birth right on through until they graduated from college.”

His vision was both unprecedented and expensive. But Canada, 58, an intense, charismatic man, is successfully implementing it through the Harlem’s Children Zone (HCZ), which now covers more than 10,000 children with comprehensive educational, medical, and social services in central Harlem with an annual budget estimated at \$40 million for 2009.

Canada’s accomplishments are drawing widespread attention from leaders as a model for how to break poverty’s iron grip through an absolute commitment to children and their welfare — a commitment summed up in the title of a new book about Canada’s work: *Whatever It Takes*, by Paul Tough, an editor at the *New York Times Magazine*. Among them is President Barack Obama, who during the 2008 presidential campaign praised the Harlem Children’s Zone as “an all-encompassing, all-hands-on-deck antipoverty effort that is literally saving a generation of children in a neighborhood where they were never supposed to have a chance.”

Observers are impressed not only with Canada’s vision, but also with his results. Last year, almost 100 percent of all HCZ third-graders tested at or above grade level on state tests, an unprecedented result for an inner-city New York school.

One element that Canada emphasizes is early exposure to language, building on research showing that a key difference between poor and professional families is neither race nor income, but, as author Tough says, “the sheer number of words your parents spoke to you as a child.”

Researchers found that in middle-class families, children from birth to three years old — a period of maximum brain development — heard as many as 20 million more words (often the same words repeated) than poor children. In other words, something as simple as reading to a child every single night, which HCZ urges of all its parents, can produce enormous, positive results in the child’s life.

But reading is only one key to Canada’s revolutionary approach, which he terms “the conveyor belt,” meaning

that HCZ doesn’t just intervene with children at certain times, but provides a full range of services, all free, “from cradle to college.” The conveyor belt begins with HCZ’s celebrated Baby College for pregnant and new mothers, followed by the Harlem Gems pre-school program and Promise Academy charter schools — all supplemented by free medical and dental care, after-school programs, and such special services as fitness programs to combat obesity and treat rampant childhood asthma. And then, as this first generation grows, HCZ will remain with them through secondary school and college.

“They get what middle-class and upper-middle-class kids get,” Canada told the television newsmagazine *60 Minutes*. “They get safety. They get structure. They get academic enrichment. They get cultural activity. They get adults who love them and are prepared to do anything. And, I mean, I’m prepared to do anything to keep these kids on the right track.”

FRANCINE PROSE: DEFENDING WORDS AND WRITERS

You might expect most writers to be concerned about issues of freedom of expression. But noted American author Francine Prose has taken her commitment to writers and writing to another level. Since 2007, she has



Francine Prose

© AP Images/Jason DeCrow

served as president of the PEN American Center. This is the U.S. arm of International PEN, founded in 1921, which claims the distinction of being the oldest literary and human rights organization in the world.

Prose joins a distinguished list of distinguished writers who have served with the PEN American Center over the years, among them playwrights Arthur Miller and Eugene

O'Neill, essayists Susan Sontag and James Baldwin, novelists Thomas Mann and John Steinbeck, and poets Allen Ginsberg and Robert Frost.

Prose, born in 1947, is widely respected as a writer of fiction, literary essays, and commentary on public issues. She is an editor and teacher as well. Her highly praised novels reflect an eclectic range of subjects, from academia (*Blue Angel*), intolerance and grace (*A Changed Man*), and, most recently, a young girl's coming of age (*Goldengrove*). Her most recent nonfiction book, reflecting two of her own passions, is *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*.

The PEN American Center (whose acronym derives from "poets, editors, novelists") is the largest of PEN International's 144 chapters in 99 countries and has more than 3,300 professional members. In its charter, PEN declares that it "stands for the principle of unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and among all nations ... and opposes any form of suppression of freedom of expression ... and arbitrary censorship."

PEN American Center has criticized the U.S. government over issues of privacy and judicial oversight. PEN, for example, joined with organizations representing librarians, booksellers, and authors to call for changes to the post-9/11 Patriot Act that would better protect the privacy of Americans. PEN has also been highly critical of the law giving the U.S. government rights to expanded electronic surveillance, calling it "an unnecessary abandonment of constitutional protections prohibiting 'general warrants and unreasonable searches.'"

Under Prose's leadership, the PEN American Center has continued its vigorous campaign to defend and protect writers around the world as well. Prose was especially critical of China for its "suffocating restrictions" on press coverage of unrest in Tibet in 2008 and its failure to live up to its promises of free and open press coverage during the Beijing Olympics.

Every November 15, International PEN marks the Day of the Imprisoned Writer "to honor the courage of all writers who stand up against repression and defend freedom of expression." In 2008 PEN highlighted five such writers:

- Eynulla Fatullayev, Azerbaijan, serving a prison term for political commentary and an investigation into the murder of a fellow journalist.
- Tsering Woeser, China, writer and poet who "has suffered repeated and sustained harassment for her writings on Tibet."

- Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Iran, journalist and Kurdish rights activist now in prison.
- Melissa Rocia Patiño Hinostroza, Peru, student and poet on trial for alleged terrorist ties despite a lack of evidence.
- The writers, cast, and crew of *The Crocodile of Zambezi, Zimbabwe*, a play that has been banned and its playwrights and members threatened and beaten.

"The work PEN does to advance literature and promote a world community of writers is perennially important," Prose has said. "But our commitment to free expression — to guaranteeing the human rights and saving the lives of writers throughout the world, protecting the freedom of journalists here and abroad, fighting government incursions on the privacy of readers, and working in prisons and schools — has never before seemed so important, and so profoundly necessary."

KATHERINE CHON AND DEREK ELLERMAN: FIGHTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

What began with a dinner conversation among students in 2001 at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, has today become one of the largest organizations in the United States and Japan fighting human trafficking.

Katherine Chon was discussing the historical abolition of slavery in the United States with her classmate Derek



Katherine Chon and Derek Ellerman

David Paterson

Ellerman when the talk veered to modern-day slavery. Soon after, the local newspaper published a piece about six South Korean women who had been forced to work in a brothel in Providence, and Chen had an “aha” moment.

“It hit hard when I read they were about my age and from my native country,” she said in a 2007 *Women’s Health* magazine article.

As a result, Chon and Ellerman founded the Polaris Project, named for the North Star, which guided slaves from the U.S. South northward to freedom along what was called the Underground Railroad in the years before the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865).

The two developed a business plan for a Web site that would offer immediate, practical help to victims of human trafficking, and they submitted their idea to Brown University’s annual entrepreneurship competition. Despite its nonprofit status, the project won the \$12,500 second prize. Chon and Ellerman moved to Washington, D.C., in 2003 to establish an office.

Their challenge is a daunting one. “The anti-trafficking movement is young and is tackling criminal organizations that are supported by some of the most intractable societal ills,” Ellerman has written.

The United Nations estimates that 12.3 million people are in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, and sexual servitude at any given time. Other estimates range widely from 4 million to 27 million.

The Polaris Project attacks the problem on many fronts. It conducts direct outreach and victim identification, including multilingual crisis hotlines, and offers social services and transitional housing to victims. Polaris operates the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, which serves as the central national hotline on human trafficking in the United States.

The organization also advocates stronger state and federal anti-trafficking legislation and engages community members in local and national grassroots efforts. Polaris has a professional staff of more than 30, with offices in Washington; Newark, New Jersey; Denver, Colorado; and Tokyo.

Although there are a number of active anti-trafficking organizations, Polaris is one of the few that works to attack the criminal industry directly through strengthened law enforcement, and not just treat victims.

Since criminals often regard trafficking as a relatively low-risk, high-profit activity, according to Ellerman, “a focused strategy that introduces obstacles to profit, combined with more prosecutions and convictions, is the most efficient approach to undermining the industry.” Ellerman also works on human trafficking issues with Ashoka, an association dedicated to social entrepreneurship.

In the coming year, Polaris plans to strengthen its national policy program, which includes model anti-trafficking legislation for states. Chon and Ellerman also hope to strengthen Polaris’s national hotline, which tripled in volume to 6,000 calls last year and identified 2,300 potential victims of trafficking.

“The center allows us to have eyes and ears on the ground, in the community,” Chon says. “The calls help us to identify more victims, refer them to services, and build cases against traffickers.”

She cites the example of a teacher who, after receiving training in spotting trafficking victims, called about two Latino girls missing from an after-school program. The girls were later found and a case brought against the traffickers.

Chon also hopes to build broader regional partnerships with organizations in other countries. “We want to crack down on very specific markets and particular types of criminal networks — Asian massage parlors or trafficking in Latino women and children — each of which has its own market dynamic,” she says.

Ellerman and Chon believe in both their cause and their ability to create meaningful change.

“I believe that individuals can make a difference,” Chon said in a magazine interview. “Follow whatever you are passionate about, embrace it, and don’t be afraid to accept the challenge.”

“The good news is that this fight can be won,” Ellerman has written. “And skilled, visionary, and yet pragmatic organizations and leaders are at the heart of this effort.” ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Additional Resources

Books, articles, films, and organizations concerned with nonviolent change

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FILMOGRAPHY: DOCUMENTARIES AND BIOGRAPHIES

A Force More Powerful (2003)

<http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org>

Producer: York Zimmerman, Inc.

Synopsis: This television series profiles how millions of people chose to battle brutality and oppression during the 20th century with nonviolent weapons — and won.

Running Time: 180 minutes

Bringing Down a Dictator: From Dictatorship to Democracy (2003)

<http://www.yorkzim.com/pastProd/bringingDown.html>

Producer: York Zimmerman, Inc.

Synopsis: Learn about nonviolent struggle and action as a means of political defiance. This film also explores how nonviolence helped depose Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic.

Running Time: 56 minutes

Eyes on the Prize (1987)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/index.html>

Producer: Harry Hampton

Synopsis: *Eyes on the Prize* is an award-winning documentary series on the U.S. civil rights movement that brilliantly illuminates the struggle for racial equality and social justice.

Running Time: 14 hours

The Fight in the Fields: César Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle (1997)

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields/index.html>

Producer: Paradigm Productions

Synopsis: *The Fight in the Fields* follows the first successful organizing drive of farm workers in the United States, while recounting the many failed and dramatic attempts to unionize that led up to this victory. Among the barriers to organizing was the Bracero Program, which flooded the fields with Mexican contract workers between World War II and the 1960s.

Running Time: 120 minutes

Freedom on My Mind (1994)

<http://www.film.com/movies/freedom-on-my-mind/14697772>

Producer: Connie Field

Synopsis: Telling the dramatic story of the Mississippi voter registration project from 1961 to 1964, *Freedom on My Mind* is a landmark documentary that chronicles the most tumultuous and significant years in the history of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Running Time: 104 minutes

Gandhi (1982)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083987/>

Producer: Richard Attenborough

Synopsis: The biography of Mahatma Gandhi, who rose from a small-time lawyer to India's spiritual leader through his philosophy of nonviolent but direct-action protest.

Running Time: 188 minutes

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Burma Global Action Network

<http://www.burma-network.com/>

Día de Solidaridad con Cuba

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dia-de-Solidaridad-con-Cuba/12432514783>

Global Youth Movement

<http://www.globalyouthmovement.com/>

Invisible Children

<http://www.invisiblechildren.com/home.php>

Million Voices Against FARC

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/One-million-voices-against-FARC/10780185890>

One Million People Against Crime in South Africa

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6340297802>

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