

# Preface

The twentieth century has been called the bloodiest century in human history, marked by the loss of more than 100 million lives in war. Besides its bloody legacy, a story that is less often told about the twentieth century is the success of nonviolent people power movements. The twentieth was the first century in human history in which many large-scale nonviolent movements successfully toppled oppressive regimes, often in the face of overwhelming military power. Even as we have transitioned into the twenty-first century, violent human encounters in Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur, Congo, and other places capture our attention and eclipse the many and varied nonviolent social movements that are taking place around the world. One purpose of this book is to heighten awareness of nonviolent movements that continue to take place as the twenty-first century unfolds.

Most people are familiar with nonviolence through the lives of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The nonviolent activism of these two individuals has helped shape our understanding of nonviolence as both a philosophy of life and as a political strategy. Despite the success of the nonviolent social change movements of Gandhi and King, individuals are often reluctant to participate or even consider a nonviolent action as a means of pursuing goals. Part of this reticence is based on a view that sees active nonviolence as ineffective in transforming social conditions. People often lament that “Gandhi was great but that was a long time ago and he was dealing with the British. My situation is different.” Or “I can’t do what they did because I am dealing with violent people.” These types of comments are not only misinformed but, unfortunately, by default, they support violent approaches to problems. The second purpose of this book is to demonstrate the effectiveness of nonviolent action in a broad number of contexts and in the past two decades.

By writing this book, I not only hope to increase awareness of the prevalence of nonviolent action and its successful use in diverse settings, but equally important is to make it clear how nonviolence is based on a range of theories and sound social science principles. This book is interdisciplinary, as I discuss theories and perspectives of nonviolence drawn from the fields of anthropology, political science, psychology, religious studies, and sociology. Individuals in each of these disciplines will see major work within their own field plus they will realize interconnections to related fields.

While multidisciplinary discussions will appear throughout the book, this book will be written from the point of view of a psychologist. Ever since the beginning of modern psychology, psychologists have been concerned about the problem of war. William James, one of the founders of modern psychology, wrote an important article at the beginning of the twentieth century entitled "The Moral Equivalent of War." James (1895/1910) argued that war instilled in people some positive qualities including patriotism and discipline. What was needed, he suggested, was a suitable substitute for war that would instill these same qualities. For James, that substitute was mandatory service and hard labor for the country. In a sense, this book takes James' challenge seriously, and highlights ways in which contemporary nonviolent social movements around the world are providing a "moral equivalent of war." As I will point out, participation in these movements requires great courage, solidarity, and discipline as participants face well organized, heavily financed, and often armed resistance to change.

In addition, my psychological approach to nonviolence is distinguished from others because it emphasizes beliefs, motives, values, and other mainstream social psychological concepts in a manner that is intended to be informative to psychologists and understandable to nonpsychologists. Realizing the dynamics of human psychology are always embedded in sociohistorical and cultural contexts, I situate the analyses of nonviolence within cross-cultural contexts. Above all, I want to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of nonviolent behavior that can be used in a variety of contexts by adherents of many disciplines.

The final focus of the book is to review selected methodological issues that are important to social scientists interested in conducting research or utilizing the results on nonviolence and nonviolent action. Important measurement issues, micro and macrolevel concerns, mediating variables in nonviolent behaviors, and directions for further research will be presented to achieve this purpose.

I want to thank many people for their support, feedback and critiques during different aspects of the writing process. First, I want to thank David Johnson and Roger Johnson for writing the Forward to this book. Their comments nicely situate nonviolence into the larger field of peace psychology. Additionally, I want to thank Dan Christie, editor of the peace psychology series of Springer Publishing, for his encouragement to write this book and his insight and input throughout the process of making this book a reality. I also appreciated the comments and recommendations of anonymous reviewers of the book prospectus that have pushed my writings in directions that were beneficial to the final product. In addition, I want to thank Anna Tobias and the staff at Springer for their help in bringing this book to press.

Second, I am indebted to critical comments, guidance, and support for my research on nonviolence from many peace psychologists over the years. This group includes Linden Nelson, Dan Christie, Dick Wagner, Mike Wessells, Deborah DuNann Winter, Milt Schwebel, Marc Pilisuk, Kathleen Kostelny, Paul Kimmel, Judy Van Hoorn, Steve Fabick, Eduardo Diaz, Diane Perlman, Anne Anderson, Todd Sloan, Amal Winter, Tony Marsella, Tina Montiel, Judy Kuriansky, Klaus Boehnke, Linda Wolff, V. K. Kool, Abelardo Brenes and many, many more. The support of this peace psychology community was unbelievably helpful to me.

Third, I want to thank my colleagues at Lewis-Clark State College for granting me a sabbatical in the initial stages of writing and in supporting me throughout the writing process. I am grateful for the assistance and critiques provided by Rhett Diessner on the section of the book dealing with the Bahá'í faith. I am also appreciative of the assistance the Lewis-Clark State College library provided in locating much of the material cited in this book. I especially want to thank Becky Grinolds and Samantha Thompson-Franklin for the hours they logged for me for interlibrary loans and collection development. I also want to express thanks to the students in my Peace, Conflict and Violence class and my Advanced Research Seminar who read early drafts of sections of this manuscript and provided some good suggestions for modification and improvement of the book. I particularly want to acknowledge the excellent, constructive feedback from Becca Solom and Christina Browne. I also want to thank Linda Scott, a good friend and artist, who worked on early versions of the cover design.

Last and definitely not least, I want to thank my family for their understanding and tolerance that allowed me the time away from my usual family activities to complete the writing of this book. My wife and best friend, Andrea, started me on the direction of peace and nonviolence research years ago when she admonished me to do something of consequence with my professional life and focus on peace. During the writing, she took on an increased burden at home that was truly appreciated. My sons, Michael and Joey, and my daughters, Caitlin and ZJ, spent the last year and a half without as much interaction from their father as they should have experienced yet were patient and encouraging in my writing. Michael's intense conversations about many aspects of nonviolence and the book were helpful in organizing material in my mind. Joey read early drafts and with the help of his friend, Manar, gave excellent feedback about the section on Islam. Caitlin provided very useful input with the content related to women's issues. ZJ gave me great moral support by just putting a hand on my shoulder from time to time and saying, "How's the book coming Dad?"

As you move through the pages of this book, I ask you to keep in mind the words of Martin Luther King Jr. when he said, "Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation (cited in Groves, 2008, p. 159)." Each of us can play some role in making that happen.

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Nonviolence and Peace Psychology

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2009, XVIII, 294 p. 8 illus.,

ISBN: 978-0-387-89348-8