



Making Waves



Turning the Tide Programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Nonviolence for social change

Issue 23

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Editorial

In this issue we're telling stories. We have accounts of actions at a student sit-in, solidarity work with benefits claimants, students concerned about unethical investments by their university, and a flavour of the creative actions of the UK Uncut campaign. These are small stories from Britain, snapshots from recent months, and it can be uplifting to know that these sorts of activities go on every day all over the world. Little changes are being made by people taking action all the time and everywhere to challenge the injustices they experience in their lives. As Shelley Anderson says in the first article, most of it is undocumented and the people doing it are anonymous. But this is how change happens – as the late musician and poet Gil Scott-Heron said, "The revolution will not be televised". Two factors seem to motivate people to do these things: their own suffering or empathy with the suffering of others. When people driven by these imperatives come together and take collective action it can be a powerful challenge to those acting from different motives, like fear and control.

But nonviolence goes further than that: it offers an opportunity for us to change the characteristics of the violent society that play out in our own behaviours. We can choose not to participate in a self-repeating violent system and adopt a different way of being, both as individuals and groups. In this way we can use the sorts of actions recounted in these pages publicly to resist one system and offer up another. And by being the alternative we subvert the status quo and build a different world.

Hannah Arendt coined the phrase "banality of evil" to describe the everyday activities of Nazi Germany. She was talking about the normality of daily behaviours at all levels that reflected and sustained an abhorrant societal system. Perhaps we should promote the phrase "banality of good" to describe the kindnesses and practical love we consistently show each other – and our daily actions for justice and peace. In all of the stories contained in this issue I hope we can glimpse the other world that is possible.

Steve Whiting, Turning the Tide programme manager

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Nonviolence for a Change, Training, Sept 2011 to June 2012, Huddersfield

If you want to make your dreams of a better world come true then wake up and join this course!

'The course has been vital. I don't feel I was in a position to facilitate nonviolence training before now, it feels like a foundation on which I can build future work. As an activist it has affected the way I think about and plan action and group work. I feel empowered by the course, braver and more able to act and support myself and those around me.'

Course participant 2009

More information on the back.

The power in telling stories

Shelley Anderson

Nonviolence is a value, a tool, and a force which ordinary people can and do use daily. The undocumented nature of much nonviolent action perpetrates the myth that it is ineffectual: it is our duty to tell the stories.

The scene: several years ago in a Dublin sidewalk café. Two human rights activists, one African, the other North American, are talking at the next table. I sit at another table, an unrepentant eavesdropper. "I must tell you this story," the African lawyer said. "Some women from both sides of the conflict had been secretly talking to each other. A message from the other side was smuggled to the wife of a local military commander. The women learned that her husband has been ordered to attack a nearby village. In the message, the women beg her to stop the attack. The wife is in a quandary. How can she stop a military attack? Time is running out. Then she has an idea. She goes to her husband and tells him that she must go shopping the next day in that village. Her husband tries to dissuade her but she insists she must go. She knows the attack is scheduled for tomorrow morning. Her husband is in a panic. He calls off the attack. The women succeeded!"

This is a success story indeed, and an example of what can happen when people are willing to cross lines - whether the lines of so-called enemies or the lines of self-imposed limits.

There are several other things about this story that strike me. The first is that it is an oral anecdote - as far as I know, it has never been documented. The second is that the protagonists are anonymous.

During my work for an international peace organisation I have come across many such stories of successful nonviolent actions. Many are personal, eyewitness accounts; others are stories passed on by older family members or colleagues. Most are unwritten and will remain unwritten. Most, especially if the main protagonists are women, are anonymous. The third characteristic of this opening story is its ordinariness. Shopping is an act of daily life which millions of people engage in. It is an unremarkable act.

Anecdotal, anonymous and above all, ordinary. These words, for me, can be used to both describe active nonviolence and to explain, in part, why active nonviolence is not taken more seriously in discussions on war and peace.

The undocumented nature of much nonviolent action helps perpetrate a myth that nonviolence is ineffectual. Anonymity deprives people of necessary role models. The ordinariness of nonviolence makes

people blind to all the potential of organised, active nonviolence.

It is fortunate that there are more case studies of nonviolent mass actions, such as the 2006 Democracy Movement in Nepal, or the various dissident movements of the 1980s that led to such changes in Eastern Europe. Such documentation is crucial in developing analyses that will lead to better nonviolent strategies that address the underlying causes of violent conflict: poverty and injustice. Documenting and spreading stories, both individual and collective, of active nonviolence are important in empowering people. Nonviolence is not the reserve of saints or specialists with academic degrees in conflict management. Nonviolence is a value, a tool, and a force which ordinary people can and do use daily.

Nonviolent action occurs all around us, on both large and small scales. It is the ordinariness of nonviolence that makes it invisible. The bulk of human interactions are not violent. The majority of human beings is not directly engaged in killing other human beings - and does not want to be. People learn violence, just as people learn nonviolence. (For insights into the psychological costs, to individual soldiers and to society at large, of learning how to kill, see Lt. Col. Dave Groomsman's book *On Killing*). Cooperation and compassion have been essential in our survival as a species.

"I've been involved in peace missions for years, with the United Nations and with different non-governmental organisations. But the most direct peace action I've ever seen was on a street in the West Bank. A young boy had picked up a rock to throw at an Israeli soldier. An old Palestinian woman saw the boy and started talking to him. I'll never know what she said, but she kept talking to him until he dropped the stone and walked away," said a Dutch activist.

The glamour and excitement of war can stand in sharp contrast to the ordinariness of nonviolence. Few have written about this so eloquently as US war correspondent Chris Hedges. "The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living...It gives us resolve, a cause. It allows us to be noble."

In his aptly titled book on the myths of war, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Hedges tells the story of a Bosnian Serb couple whose son was killed by Bosnian Muslims. While they had no love for the latter, they would protest when fellow Serbs condemned Muslims by telling the story of a Muslim farmer who saved their granddaughter's life.

The girl was born during the siege of Gorazde. Weakened by hunger, the daughter-in-law could not nurse. The couple fed the baby tea for five days, but it was clear she was dying. A Muslim farmer named

Fadil Fejzic began showing up every morning with milk from his cow for the baby.

"He never said a word. He refused our money. Other families on the street began to insult him. They told him to give his milk to Muslims. He came for 442 days, until my daughter-in-law and granddaughter left Gorazde for Serbia," the grandmother said.

"It is our duty to always tell this story," her husband said. Hedges writes that such small acts of decency in wartime have important consequences. "These acts, unrecognised at the time, make it impossible to condemn, legally or morally, an entire people. They serve as reminders that we all have a will of our own, a will that is independent of the state or the nationalist cause."

This to me is the power of nonviolence, a continuous and radical struggle to stay human by always recognising the humanity of others.

Shelley Anderson is the founder of the Women Peacemakers Programme of International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

www.opendemocracy.net/shelley-anderson/power-in-telling-stories

This article was first published on www.OpenDemocracy.net, 7 July 2010

Action against poverty

Lani Parker

London Coalition Against Poverty (LCAP) is a small coalition of local groups who organise for individuals rights. These include housing, benefits, and any other problem that members bring to the groups. We are independent, and not linked to any particular religious or political party. We are not a charity and we are funded by member's contributions. The groups use direct action and other tactics to obtain people's rights. Group members support each other to get the knowledge they need and decide on the best course of action. Islington Poverty Action Group (IPAG) is a new local group and we have been supporting each other in the struggle against benefits cuts and privatisation. One member describes how she got involved: "I was outside the jobcentre and this girl handed me a leaflet. I said what's this about, thinking it was actually from the job centre, and she said we are a group and we work for people's rights. I was all for that and I said great, give me the leaflet, saw all the notices on it for joining, told my friend and came down to the meeting. And for the first time in my life felt all the work I was doing I could focus on one point and belong to a group who are really fighting for people's rights and equality."

The group operates on a collective basis without hierarchy. Another IPAG member says: "I found it quite collaborative really, I went to the meetings and said what my problems were and a couple of other people offered to come with me to complain and support me there, so I thought that was quite good."

We aim to ensure that everyone has a say and everyone is valued in the group. One of the ways we do this is by sharing knowledge. Everyone has some experience of problems with the system and it is through sharing these experiences that we get strength. Nobody is an expert. As an IPAG member says, this collaborative way of working means "you feel on a level with other people, you are not talking to people who have never been through the benefit system, you are talking to people who are going through it, all the problems they have, all the fights, disruptions and you feel this kind of unity, this universality about everything."



Lani at an IPAG demonstration against house evictions

If you have been unemployed for more than twelve months you are required to go to a private company or provider whose role is to help you find work. The reality for many people is that the company does not help in finding jobs and can use powers to sanction benefits in order to intimidate people. One member said that the problem is the way the system is set up, not the individuals who work there. The employees have families to feed and they are given payment by results targets. They therefore feel they need to intimidate the claimants; they pick on people who are quiet and don't have any backing behind them. Maybe it is because the employees are being picked on themselves by the management, but this is why we need to back each other up.

One member of the group was having problems with his employment provider. They had threatened to cut his benefits and had been calling him at the weekends demanding that he attend courses that don't exist. We worked out a strategy for getting the situation changed. We wrote to the employment provider and the Job Centre, remembering that the Department for Work and Pensions contracts private

companies and it's important to make sure the government is accountable.

We also leafleted claimants outside the employment provider as well as outside job centres. Leafletting means more people get to know about what we do, we can talk to people about their problems and build up a picture of the wider situation. It also made the staff aware of our group.

Eventually after we put quite a lot of pressure on the Jobcentre and the Employment Provider a meeting was offered to try and resolve the complaint. As a group we prepared for the meeting, clarifying what results the member wanted. These included the right to change his adviser and a better response to individual complaints in the future. Previously the employment provider had told the group member that they could not change advisers. It would set too much of a precedent; other people would then be demanding to change advisers all the time. The Employment Provider had not recognised us as a body and so we were concerned that there would be problems at the meeting. It was decided that three group members, including the person whose complaint it was would go to the meeting. The group member said that having the others with them made a difference: "I think because they were there he was more careful about what he said, because there were witnesses. It would have been quite different if they weren't there, he probably would have tried to soft soap me."

At the meeting the company assured the member that they would not have to use that adviser again and that they would be given a copy of the complaints procedure, which they had previously not been given. There was a concern that the member may be victimised after coming in with the group. One of his supporters said "the manager at the meeting was polite, very reasonable, and I think that's good but I left with the understanding that I really didn't want to have to come back and go over this again and particularly I didn't want to leave [the member] there to be victimised, I wanted to make sure he was absolutely going to be left alone."

The member says
"At the moment I don't see what they can do, they might try to be difficult, but apart from that... I mean I don't have to be friends with them, I'm not here to fraternise with them".

The group uses many different strategies to support members and we are prepared to think about other tactics we could use. The point is we operate as a group to support individuals in getting what they are entitled to.

With the current cuts to the benefits system and public services the group wants to focus on building our capacity to act locally, joining national and international coalitions. A member says: "because of the cuts, there will be a lot of issues coming up.

LCAP, that alliance, needs to be built on because of the privatisation of the benefits system, the cuts for students, cuts to jobs, housing issues, things are generally going to get worse. So it's important for the group to be strong and active. It will be a struggle but I don't think there's any other way."

Lani Parker is a former QPSW Peaceworker and has worked with Peace Brigades International, Citizens Advice Bureau and Enfield Action for Disability

For more information or to get involved go to www.lcap.org.uk

Patience, faith and peaceful protest: a lost legacy?

Abi Haque

We live in a world where everything is expected to be instant; news spreads like wildfire through twitter, you can order your groceries online and have them delivered to your doorstep within hours, if your pizza takes more than an hour to get to you it's delivered free to make sure the customer is not dissatisfied... So is it surprising that we expect social change to happen quickly? Have we forgotten the virtue of patience, and is this eroding our faith in peaceful protest?

I work for Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) and coordinate our Universities Network lobbying people on arms trade issues. I've had the pleasure of working with young people that still have faith, patience and dedication to campaign peacefully, and they achieve real results. This is in stark contrast to the media coverage of violence in the student cuts protests. In this time of increased activism there are those who are voicing the opinion that the time for peaceful protest and lobbying is over, as the change they are seeking hasn't happened in the time scale they are prepared to work with. The consequence is violence in the form of flares, battering rams and general destruction - and there are even more people expressing a defensive apathy or loss of faith and feel they do not have the political agency to change government policy or society where it matters. I personally disagree with both these points of view.

I want to share a powerful example of a successful university action and show how simple and effective people are when they engage with the opposition and maintain faith in their cause.

York University

Students at York University have been expressing concern over the university's investments in the arms trade since 2005 and have been campaigning for an ethical investment policy through the DISARM York campaign. The university's main arms investments were with BAE Systems (the world's largest arms company) and Rolls Royce (25% of military aircraft worldwide has one of their engines).

- Freedom of Information requests (FOI's) were made to ascertain the level of investment the university had in the arms trade.
- Articles were written and published in the university and local press on why the arms trade is unethical sparking a widespread information campaign giving students the opportunity to be informed on the ethical debate on investing in arms companies.
- The Student Union got behind the DISARM campaign and the ethics officer took the responsibility for asking the question, "Should the money we pay to the university in fees fund arms sales to Saudi Arabia or companies with more peaceful interests?"
- Many of the major student societies like Amnesty, the Democratic Socialists' Association and People & Planet officially championed the movement to divest.
- Student officers provided a strong voice in the media and on campus encouraging participation. Freddy Vanson, Campaign Officer for Amnesty International said that those he represented "believe in peace, participation and pacifism...we want the university to invest in education and welfare, not death and destruction."
- The ethical investment motion was drafted and debated.
- Formal debates were organised to allow people to engage in the arguments for and against ethical investment.
- Demonstrations were held on campus to make a strong statement to the university of the students' wishes. Protesters chanted "hear our song, disarm York, bin the bomb," "teaching not killing, drop beats, not bombs!" and "Rolls Royce, BAE, you can't teach a thing to me!"
- A petition was circulated for students to sign supporting the campaign (over 2000 signatures were collected and the petition was handed in to the Universities administration centre).
- An event called DISARM was organised, which was hosted by HomeGrownSounds and RAG. YUSU Environment and Ethics Office said that the event created 'a great atmosphere and a feeling of unity amongst everyone supporting the cause.' The music event featured a range of artists and groups from York and elsewhere.
- David Duncan, the Registrar and Secretary, and Graham Gilbert, the Director of Finance agreed to take the policy on ethical investment to the University Council for approval in March 2009.
- The ethical investment policy was passed by the University Council on March 6th 2009.



Students against York University's investments in the arms trade.

So why was the campaign so successful? Well, the DISARM campaign engaged directly with the students, the university structures (i.e. Student Union and the University Council) and the local community through the media to inform people of the arms trade and the universities complicit financial dealings with arms companies. Through this an emphasis was placed on students having ownership of how their institutions represent them, the idea of community and personal responsibility was emphasised and helped to build momentum and support for the campaign.

A large multi-society coalition formed who were prepared to champion the investment motion. The campaign did not provide a quick result, but persistence paid off and societies involved in DISARM made sure that the campaign was handed down to incoming students as others graduated keeping pressure on the university to change their policies. The actions were easy and accessible, eg the petition, the protests were fun and well spirited, which ended up making the movement bigger, powerful and more respected.

The campaign took years to achieve its goals and required faith and patience that they could break through the bureaucratic barriers and opposition to the motion. But it happened. They are now lobbying the trustees of the university's pension funds to adopt the same ethical policy. No doubt they'll succeed in this too.

Abi Haque is a QPSW Peaceworker placed with Campaign Against Arms Trade. She co-ordinates CAAT's Universities Network.

www.caat.org.uk/campaigns/universities

How to change the world: pee in a pan

John Walton

One hundred people had entered a university lecture theatre to start a "sit-in". We were hoping to create a space of free, open discussion and alternative learning in protest against the high fee increases and planned cuts to teaching budgets. We organised ourselves by non-hierarchical consensus decision-making and our movement was set amongst a wave of similar protests happening across the country.



Sit-in at Warwick University

There was a significant amount of interest from students outside, but university security decided not to let anyone access the room after its initial occupation. Those already inside were also not allowed to leave and return, even for toilet breaks. After three hours the toilet situation became desperate and numbers began to dwindle as people left to relieve themselves. Others who remained became frustrated and restless. Two of us, who had been reading *Jesus and Nonviolence - A Third Way* by Walter Wink, started discussing possible pacifist responses to the situation: a third way that was neither fight, nor flight.

We came up with a plan, and suggested it to the group. If security guards would not let us go to the toilet one at a time, we would pee into a large pan, take it to the entrance of the lecture theatre and ask them to empty it for us. We politely and openly explained the plan to the security guards at the entrance, making clear our intention was not to embarrass them but that we simply wanted to continue our peaceful protest. We gave them ten minutes and watched as they frantically phoned through to university head offices.

After 15 minutes the saucepan was filled. I was the lucky one who got to carry it to the door. At the entrance, I explained what we were doing to the crowd gathering there. I was careful to explain that this wasn't a personal attack against security, and we wanted to continue our protest but were denied use of the toilet five metres away. The pan

highlighted our request to use these toilets, one at a time. The security guard adjacent to the door didn't accept the pan, so I placed it gently on the floor and went back inside.

There was a knock on the door ten minutes later, and one of the security guards came in with the pan. He had emptied it, rinsed it out and brought it back! Apparently they had used a towel to cover the contents of the pan while they carried it across Arts Centre concourse, past the crowd and nearby café. The entire process was repeated with two more pans. On the third occasion, policy was changed and we were allowed to go to the toilet. This made it possible for the sit-in to continue.

This is a trivial and humorous example of nonviolent direct action, but it is representative of a deeper concept. By being assertive rather than aggressive, and taking the security's actions through to their logical conclusions, we compelled them to recognise our dignity and offered them a solution that they could accept without retribution or loss of face. The emphasis of nonviolent direct

action is on changing unjust rules rather than humiliating or punishing people who stand by them.

Pacifism is not about being passive. It is about assertively reshaping a situation in such a way that the person doing wrong is obliged to recognise the fundamental humanity of the person being victimised, and is morally compelled to stop exploiting them. Sometimes this can mean suffering further in order to truly highlight injustices to those who maintain them, but it offers a path out of a conflict that can give a long-term win-win solution without resentment.

John Walton is a student at Warwick University and was active in the student protests in 2010.

*Links: <http://warwickagainstthecuts.wordpress.com>
<http://indymedia.org.uk/en/topics/education>*

UK Uncut

Chris Browne

The zeitgeist in activism in the first half of 2011 has definitely been UK Uncut. The network's ethos of enjoyable direct action has appealed to activists, and, more crucially, the middle classes in a way that no other campaign has managed to in the last few years.

With hindsight, one could easily say this development was inevitable. Indeed, the level of anger and radicalism present in the UK at the moment is something of a high water mark. The combination of job losses and austerity measures and the failure of traditional tactics have given rise to a culture of dissent, beyond the ranks of the usual suspects of anarchists and hippies.

UK Uncut has managed to transform this into something creative as well as anti-authoritarian. The radical wing of the student movement, for example, has segued into UK Uncut in the last few months. Understanding a little of the context for this is helpful:

The student movement, having had its baptism of fire in Millbank in November 2010, was let down by, first, its own elected leadership in the figurehead of Aaron Porter, and with the subsequent parliamentary vote to bring into effect £9,000 tuition fees. Left disempowered by the impotence of so many orderly marches and without faith in the vacillating National Union of Students, the movement, as a coherent force, came to an end.

But the positive outcome of this was an increasing realisation that so called student issues are not so easily compartmentalised – indeed, that no political or economic issue is truly independent of another.

The prevalence of a more holistic analysis - one that has the space to include unfashionable phrases like capitalism, and anti-capitalism once again - has definitely been a key part of student involvement in the UK Uncut actions. But we should look at UK Uncut based on its own virtues as well.

Direct action has never felt like a particularly 'British' thing. Middle England is so typically deferential (if not actively subservient) to authority that the very idea of parents taking their young children to subvert and occupy a NatWest branch on a Saturday morning is quite absurd. And yet this is exactly what happened on Saturday 26th of February.

The 26th was "Big Society Bail-in", a day of action called by UK Uncut, with around 100 Lloyds TSB, NatWest and RBS branches being occupied up and down the country.

The logic of the occupation tactic is beautiful in its simplicity: all across the board the government is implementing a series of stringent, and ideologically motivated austerity measures. The banks, however, are deemed too big to fail and, unlike the public, have the ear (and wallet) of the government. If there is one place where public services can ride out the storm - be they laundry services, childcare facilities or libraries - it is in a bank.

At 9:45am I arrived at the local café in Camden, the meeting point for the action. Having agreed to act as a legal observer, rather than attending as an activist,

I wasn't entirely sure what form the Bail-in would take. After weaving my way through a dozen energetic toddlers bouncing around in the doorway, each clutching crayons and toy musical instruments, it soon became apparent that the NatWest was to become a crèche or breakfast club.

I was interested to see how the bank would react. They had of course had prior warning - the UK Uncut press release and map of actions kept nothing secret - and it was possible they would simply shut up shop. A walk down Oxford Street during one of the anti-cuts marches in January had allowed me to see first hand the fear that so many high-street shops and banks have of demonstrators. HMV, Barclays, Top Shop, Vodafone, all pulled down their shutters as soon as the approaching crowd was in earshot. Customers were trapped inside the temporary commercial prisons, until such a time as the mob had passed.

In the event, the banks must have had a policy handed down to them from their headquarters. At 10am, when pushchairs, children and parents piled into the branch, the staff, though perceptibly stiffer, batted not an eyelid. Their security were interested only in keeping the walkway open, so that bewildered customers could continue to queue.



Photo: divinenephron.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/divinenephron/>

Cambridge: turning NatWest Bank into a library

As legal observers, wearing identifiable orange bibs, the security tended to confer authority upon us, asking us to ensure the gangway was kept clear. This wasn't our role, though, and given the policy of non-confrontation held by the bank and the police, our jobs became redundant very quickly. Looking back, aside from one heated moment when the police asked a young man and woman to leave a side room, my notes consisted almost entirely of the nursery rhymes being sung at the time.

The presence of so many children must have had something to do with the decision to allow the occupation to go ahead. With so many photojournalists on the spot any conflict would have been disastrous PR. But the children's presence had other positive consequences.

At about 11am, a drunk man came into the branch to see what the commotion was about, and proceeded to loudly question the people nearest the door. One or two of the activists took him aside and politely asked him to keep his voice down, "because there are children trying to sleep". Whether or not this was true - most of the kids were too busy hammering away at glockenspiels to consider taking a nap - it worked well, and the man enthusiastically agreed, apologised, and then left.

If the job of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible, then perhaps the job of children is to prove so delightful a distraction that any prospect of violent confrontation evaporates away. Seeing so many activists, of so many backgrounds and of so many generations in the bank was immensely refreshing. It is always a worry when you find yourself in a crowd of mostly young, white men during a demonstration, for legitimate anger and civil disobedience are the democratic right and imperative of us all.

UK Uncut has so far managed to achieve an impressive balance of radicalism, accessibility, and good humour. Its strategy has proven effective in bringing new people into activism, as well. However, its overnight success and media exposure has thrust it onto something of a pedestal. You get the sense that UK Uncut must be thinking "what next?"

Whilst the very act of creating a socially useful space in these bank branches prefigures the world we would like to see, and empowers us to think differently about the social and economic relationships of our society, occupation nonetheless runs the risk of becoming the end in and of itself. UK Uncut needs to think carefully about its strategy and goals. We are at an exciting juncture, with so much potential – and potential that UK Uncut has helped to foster. We need to keep our actions effective and subversive. Without this radical edge we risk burning out at a time when our sustained activism has never been more necessary.

Chris Browne is an activist and freelance writer based in London. His blog containing his activist writing is anarcoustic.wordpress.com

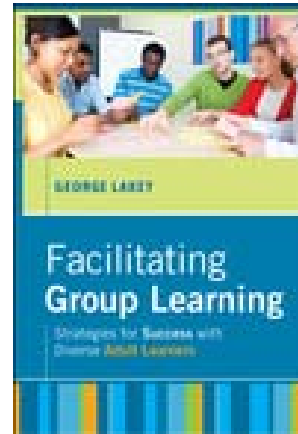
Link: www.ukuncut.org.uk

Book review

Facilitating Group Learning Strategies for Success with Diverse Adult Learners.

by George Lakey
Jossey-Bass, ISBN 978-0-470-76863-1, price \$38

Reviewed by Hannah Lewis



George Lakey is a Quaker and a social change facilitator and trainer based in the United States. He has been working with groups for many decades, in many countries and on many topics. *Facilitating Group Learning* presents the core principles and techniques of the Direct Education pedagogy as developed by Lakey.

While many workshops tend to focus purely on content, *Facilitating Group Learning* argues that learning can go to a much deeper level if the connections and interactions amongst the group can be explored and drawn out as material to work with. Lakey sees learning groups as a microcosm of the wider world: If the participants were brought up in a sexist society (eg UK), then its likely that, despite the fact that the workshop participants would happily say that someone's gender doesn't indicate their value, there is worthwhile work to be done on understanding and dealing with sexism just by peeling back some politically-correct layers and observing the inner workings of the group. To give an idea of how these layers can be peeled back and observed, I'll outline two concepts detailed in the book.

The Container

"I assume that to learn, people need to risk...To risk, people need safety. To be safe, they need a group and/or a teacher that supports them."

In order to support participants to deepen their learning and deal with difficult material, the facilitator needs to ensure that safety, or a container, is developed right from the beginning of a workshop. "A strong container has walls thick enough to hold a

group doing even turbulent work, with individuals willing to be vulnerable in order to learn.“

Lakey's ideal for a learning group is that there is a strong container and that participants be *uncomfortable* for as much of the workshop as possible. He gives the example of a bungee jumper, who checks the bungee cord won't break before jumping off the platform and out of their comfort zone. In a workshop context, when people move out of their comfort zones they move into the learning zone. So the more safe and less comfortable a group is, the deeper their learning can go.

There are many ways to strengthen the container, including encouraging participants to share information about themselves or feelings with the group, or by acknowledging and celebrating that the group isn't homogeneous, through identifying the mainstream and margins of the group.

Mainstream and Margins

Drawing on the work of psychologists Amy and Arnold Mindell, Lakey claims that every group, course and workshop has a *mainstream*, which has its qualities, behaviours, and values supported by the group. The mainstream "sets the tone, sets the communication style, and gets to have its own preferences more or less accepted by the margin." I'll use Climate Camp UK as an example: it has¹ a white, university-educated mainstream with an acceptance of direct action as part of a strategy for social change. The mainstream does important work holding the group together.

A *margin*, on the other hand, is defined by its difference to the mainstream. While some groups might see themselves as homogeneous, Lakey argues that with a closer look, every group marginalises some characteristics. Those Climate Campers who are old enough to remember Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp form a margin; those who aren't willing to sit in long meetings form another.

The mainstream is by nature oblivious to the experience of the marginalised periphery, and can de-value some of the qualities that the margins hold. The margins, on the other hand, are free of the responsibility from being at the power-centre, and when the container is strong, the margins represent the growing-edge of the group.

Whilst a particular group's mainstream might always identify as white and university educated, by becoming curious and open to the experience of the black and not university-educated participants, bridges can be built between the groups that allow a

¹ Although I'm using the present tense, in February 2011 Climate Camp decided not to operate as such, or hold a Climate Camp during 2011. What happens in 2012 remains to be seen – it might depend on how well the mainstream and margins can communicate with each other!

re-negotiation of the relationship, and strengthen the group overall.

My opinion

This book is a gold mine of quick tips and slow-digesting theory. It's also a fascinating insight into the thought processes of a very experienced trainer. I've already incorporated some of the simpler methods into my workshops, and am looking forward to developing the skills to get into the more gritty stuff.

Much of the theory and training methods are told through stories from Lakey's own experience with learning groups. This method is highly accessible to all experience levels, and makes it a very easy and compelling read. I'd recommend this book to any social change facilitator or trainer, and anyone curious about the inner workings of groups.

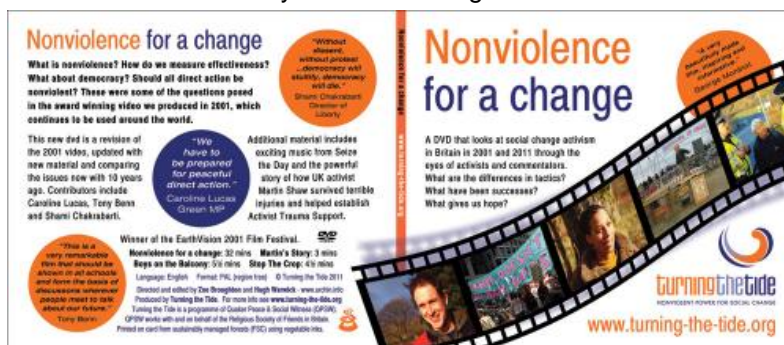
Hannah Lewis is a trainer and facilitator with *Turning the Tide* and *Seeds for Change*.

Links: www.trainingforchange.org/georgebook
www.seedsforchange.org.uk

DVD review:

Nonviolence for a Change New film from *Turning the Tide*

Reviewed by Caroline Westgate



Ten years have passed since the original TTT video *Nonviolence for a Change* was published. As this up-dated DVD vividly illustrates, more than just the technology has changed in the intervening decade.

Anti-Trident protesters will be glad to see that footage of that topic has survived into the new edit. But since 2001, other issues have moved up the agenda and are dealt with here: climate change, global capitalism, anti-terror legislation, and more recently, the spending cuts.

Some big names make telling contributions: Caroline Lucas puts in an appearance to advocate nonviolent direct action, and we see Nick Clegg in

his former guise, before his radical wings were clipped by the Coalition government.

The film begins with an historical perspective on nonviolence. Clips of the Suffragettes, Gandhi and Martin Luther King remind us that the principles and philosophy behind it have not changed. The ends we desire need to be consonant with the means we use to attain them: if we want peace we must act peacefully.

Three present-day activists are profiled, Alison Matthias, Ellen Moxley and Martin Shaw. They share their experiences and emphasise the importance of motivation, preparation and the support of an affinity group.

The film identifies a challenge for us: should we measure our success in column-inches? The press has always been more likely to cover an event where some sort of violence has broken out. During the London G20 meeting, the Climate Camp in Bishopsgate symbolically acted-out the alternative to destructive capitalism. The press ignored this aspect of the protest and instead, under headlines such as "*Anarchy Groups Battle For City*", carried reports of windows being smashed by people wearing masks.

Does protest based on violence towards property become acceptable if that seems more immediately effective than absolute nonviolence? As Martin Shaw ruefully acknowledges, it was not the thousands who marched peacefully in Prague who caused the G8 meeting to be cancelled, but the few who fought with the police and damaged property.

Damaging property has become a tactic which many activists feel is acceptable, as long as people aren't injured. Is this the point at which the principles of NV start to fray? What would we do in the context of a society where the strong violently protect their own interests against the justifiable demands of weak? It might be very productive to organise viewings of the DVD and debate that particular moral dilemma in the light of current affairs: the Arab Spring, the death of Ian Tomlinson, undercover police infiltrating protest groups.

The film uncovers a similar tension, when comments made by Ciaran O'Reilly powerfully amplify a remark made earlier in the film by Ellen Moxley: that peaceful marches, no matter how large, simply no longer influence decision-makers. Did we reach a tipping-point in 2003 when the unprecedented numbers of people who marched against the war in Iraq were so cynically ignored by Tony Blair? As Ciaran says, the marchers were "trapped in an ineffective dance with the state". What would have happened if just 1% of the millions who demonstrated had instead engaged in targeted and specific NVDA, and if the other 99% had, in solidarity, actively backed them up (paying the rent, feeding the cat)? If we had used those tactics to

show that Blair did not have the backing of the people, could he have taken the country to war?

Ten years on, the film shows nonviolence beginning to mature into an identifiable counter-culture. At the London G20, riot police in full gear were deployed partly with the attention of intimidating the thousands of demonstrators. The crowd spontaneously refused to play that game: with their arms stretched above their heads, they responded by chanting "This is not a riot". The now ubiquitous phone-cameras recorded this. Shami Chakrabarti comments that it used to be only the police who could film protests, but now surveillance is a two-way street.

Tony Benn makes a characteristically robust contribution to the DVD, in which he contends that the attitude of governments to demonstrations is becoming ever more hostile. It is important, he says, that we don't allow this to put us off.

This view is brought sharply into focus in one of the three short 'extras' which are included. Focusing on the work of Martin Shaw, it shows footage of a G8 demonstration in Switzerland in 2004. The activists' plan was for Martin and his partner to block a road by abseiling from a bridge. In an extraordinarily irresponsible act, the Swiss police cut Martin's rope so that he fell 20 metres, breaking his foot, back and pelvis. The injuries put him in hospital for a month and in bed for a further three. Ironically, it was the protesters who were found guilty of "endangering life" (sentences were suspended), and the police were never charged.

Happily, Martin eventually made a good recovery, but the psychological effects of the incident on his partner and other protesters present were more long-lasting. These problems went largely unrecognised by the protest movement, which led Martin subsequently to organise "Wellbeing Spaces" at demonstrations, offering trauma support to activists.

Paradoxically, though police brutality is shocking, we might almost be encouraged by evidence that the "anti" is being "upped", because it could mean that we are beginning to be effective. Without wavering in our objectives, we need to think deeply about how we maintain the integrity of our protest now that legislation nominally designed to counter terrorism is on the statute books.

This DVD is an excellent tool in the debate which needs to take place - on this and other issues - throughout our movement. In addition, it serves to confirm our radical instincts and reinforces our determination to be true to them. It might also embolden more people to take their first steps into nonviolent direct activism. It certainly deserves to be very widely viewed.

Comments on the 2001 video:

This is a very remarkable film that should be shown in all schools and form the basis of discussions wherever people meet to talk about our future.

Tony Benn

A beautifully made and inspiring video.

George Monbiot

Comments on the revised 2011 dvd:

This is a well made film, ideal for provoking discussion in the classroom or for folk who are new to protest.

Peace News

DVD available from: Quaker Centre, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.
quakercentre@quaker.org.uk
+44 (0)20 7663 1030
Price £5

Or view it online at:

<http://www.turning-the-tide.org/node/507>

Guidance notes for screening the film with groups are available at the same web location.

New Gene Sharp dvd: *How to Start a Revolution*

www.genesharppilm.com/trailer/About.html

Nobel Peace Prize nominee Gene Sharp is a world expert on nonviolent revolutions. He has been called the "Machiavelli of nonviolent struggle" and his work has helped remove dictatorships worldwide.

His acclaimed book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* has been translated into over 30 languages and is available free online at (www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD.pdf)

Gene sharp's methods have been used in democratic struggles in the Balkans, throughout Eastern Europe in Georgia, the Ukraine, in Indonesia, Burma and Iran. In 2009 the Iranian government charged protesters with following Gene Sharp's tactics; the *Tehran Times* reported: according to the indictment a number of the accused "confessed that the post-election unrest was pre-planned and the plan was following the timetable of the velvet revolution to the extent that over 100 stages of the 198 steps of Gene Sharp were implemented in the foiled velvet revolution."

How to Start a Revolution profiles Gene Sharp and his ally Retired U.S. Army Colonel Bob Helvey, who

has used Gene's methods to train activists in Venezuela, Burma and Belgrade, together with a number of the key leaders of revolutions around the world all.

The film climaxes with the recent Egyptian revolution as the action unfolds on the streets of Cairo.

Throughout the film is illustrated with user-generated content of protesters and activists filmed on mobile phones in the street in Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, Serbia and elsewhere in the world.

First-hand testimony from key players from the Serbian revolution of 2000 to the Iranian green uprising in 2009 reveals a decade of Gene Sharp's work in action across the globe.

DVD: *Just do it: a tale of modern-day outlaws*

<http://just-do-it.org.uk/>

Director Emily James spent over a year with activist groups such as Climate Camp and Plane Stupid to document their clandestine activities and takes us on a journey behind the scenes of a community of people who refuse to sit back and allow the destruction of their world.

Just Do It introduces us to a powerful cast of mischievous and inspiring characters who put their bodies in the way. They super-glue themselves to bank trading floors, blockade factories and attack coal power stations. Their adventures entertain, illuminate and inspire.

TTT's nonviolence training course 2011/12

In September we're running our third year-long nonviolence course. The first two in London were more popular than we anticipated and we had to introduce waiting lists. We also received many requests to hold it in other parts of the country, so, after a year of running 1-day taster workshops hosted by Quaker meetings across the country, we've found a great partner group in Huddersfield who will work with us to run our next course.

The course is a core training programme for those wanting to deepen or become more effective in their activism, or develop as nonviolence facilitators/trainers. It is suitable for those with some experience of trying to change something with others.

In the year course you'll have opportunities for

- Supported study and action assignments
- Use of an on-line forum and TTT resources library

- Facilitation practice and organizing activities
- Developing a learning and action community

We know that the way we work is of most value to smaller groups. For this reason places are limited.

Open workshops

Each workshop will explore key concepts of nonviolent social change and teach tools and skills. These can be attended as a one-off.

All single day workshops are 10am till 5.15pm.

February and May workshops are for the year-group only.

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, Church Street, Paddock, Huddersfield HD1 4TR (Wheelchair accessible)

Course fee

Year course - £350*
please book no later than 10th August 2011

Individual workshops - £35* each
please book early to avoid disappointment

*concessions and payment options available.

Booking is essential. Please contact us or visit our website for an application form and further details.

2011	Workshop
Sept 24	Nonviolence, a dangerous idea
Oct 15	Playing with power 1: understanding the system
Nov 19	Playing with power 2: changing the system
Dec 17	Campaigners do it together! How we make change
2012	
Jan 21	Don't just sit there! Exploring direct action
Feb 17-19	Is everybody happy? Tools for effective group work
Mar 17	The living revolution: building the alternative
Apr 21	Inner and outer: spirituality and activism
May 18-20	We can do that! Empowerment for social change
June 16	Celebrating nonviolence



turningthetide

NONVIOLENT POWER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

About Turning the Tide

Turning the Tide aims to advance the understanding and practice of nonviolence and its use for positive social change, using the experience of contemporary and previous nonviolence movements.

Turning the Tide provides

- public introductory interactive workshops exploring active nonviolence
- consultancies, or tailor-made workshops, for groups. These can cover campaign strategy, empowerment, building strong groups, group process and preparing for nonviolent action
- resource materials: TTT has an award winning video, *Nonviolence for a Change*, a journal *Making Waves*, a website www.turning-the-tide.org and a nonviolence resource library

Turning the Tide is a programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness. Please contact Turning the Tide, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, UK
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Views expressed in *Making Waves* and any leaflets enclosed are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by Turning the Tide, Quaker Peace & Social Witness or Britain Yearly Meeting.

Text available in large print

020 7663 1064

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