



A FORCE MORE POWERFUL

A CENTURY OF NONVIOLENT CONFLICT



COMMUNITY RESOURCE AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

A Force More Powerful, a new public television documentary series, shows how nonviolent power overcame oppression and authoritarian rule in conflict after conflict during the last 100 years. Two 90-minute programs — to be broadcast on September 18 and 25 at 9:00 p.m. ET (check local listings) — show how popular movements using nonviolent sanctions toppled tyrants, shook governments, thwarted occupying armies, and shattered ruling parties.

The series recounts Mohandas Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign against the British in India; the sit-ins and boycott that desegregated downtown Nashville, Tennessee; the nonviolent campaign against apartheid in South Africa; Danish resistance to the Nazis in World War II; the rise of Solidarity in Poland; and the momentous victory for democracy in Chile.

A Force More Powerful also introduces several extraordinary, but largely

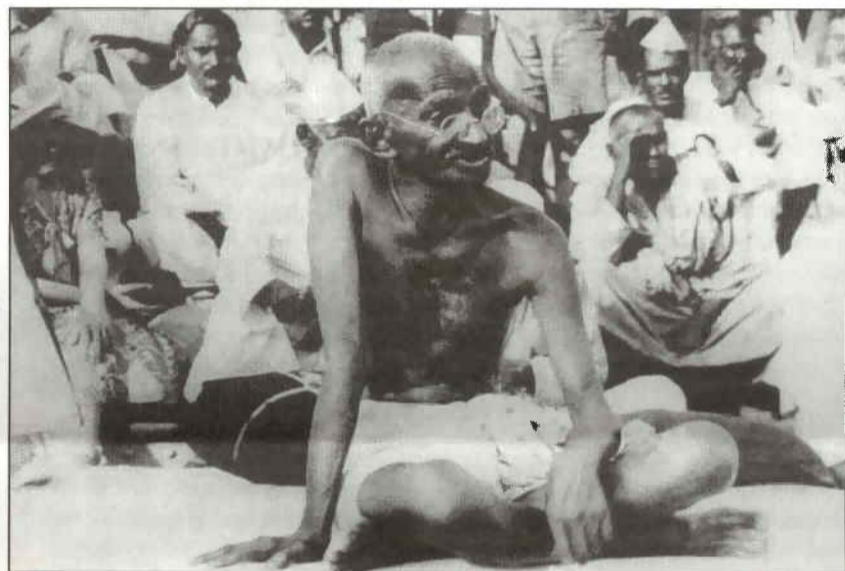
unknown individuals who drove these great events forward, and lets them tell what happened.

The phrase "a force more powerful" actually comes from Mohandas Gandhi, notes series producer/director/writer Steve York. Echoing these words in the series, Bernard

Lafayette, one of the student leaders who participated in the sit-ins in Nashville, described their nonviolent strategy: "We believed that it was a power more forceful than their dogs, their billy clubs, or their jails."

At a time when violence is still too often used by those who seek power, **A Force More Powerful** dramatizes how ordinary people throughout the world, working against all kinds of opponents, have taken up nonviolent weapons — and prevailed. ■

Mohandas Gandhi meets with villagers during the Salt March, asking for volunteers to break the law and go to jail.



Dinodia/The Image Works

"A FORCE MORE POWERFUL is eloquent testimony to the power of people's desire to be free."

Timeout New York

PRODUCER STEVE YORK TALKS ABOUT THE MAKING OF A FORCE MORE POWERFUL

How difficult is it to show history?

York: One of the problems with historical documentaries is that when it's all over and you are watching it on TV or at the movies, it has a tendency to appear foreordained. Things click along from one event to the next, as if somebody had written it as a script. You have to remember that Gandhi in India really didn't know what kind of an effect he was going to have when he set out on the Salt March. Certainly the people involved in the resistance movements in places like Poland or Chile

or Denmark had no way of knowing in advance how the story was going to end. There was no guarantee that they were going to succeed, and yet they did. That takes something extraordinary. People had to *make* it happen. That quality that you find in individual people shows on film.

The other problem I encounter when making historical documentaries is finding footage of things that are important. The most important moments from nonviolent struggles are seldom photographed. The real problem here is that nonviolent

campaigns begin with people sitting around a kitchen table late at night in a remote township in South Africa, or in an attic room in Warsaw, or in a church basement in Nashville. It's a few people having ideas and exercising what is not very dramatic, i.e., discipline, clear thinking, and all the mundane nuts and bolts of making phone calls, printing flyers, going door-to-door, and so on. What you find in the video record is a deluge of footage of people marching in the streets, demonstrating, or

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I N B R I E F

Premiere PBS Broadcast: 9 p.m. ET, September 18 and 25, 2000 (check local listings)
Program 1: Nashville (1960), India (1930), South Africa (1984)
Program 2: Denmark (1940), Poland (1980), Chile (1988)
Educational Off-Air Recording Rights: one year from initial broadcast
Narrator: Ben Kingsley
Written, produced, and directed by: Steve York

Series Editor and Principal Content Advisor: Peter Ackerman
Managing Producer: Miriam A. Zimmerman
Original music composed and conducted by: John D. Keltonic
Executive Producer: Jack DuVall
WETA Executive-in-charge of Production: Dalton Delan

Book: *A Force More Powerful—A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall (St. Martin's Press)

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Video Distributor: For information about ordering videocassettes of the two 90-minute programs for home use or the six 30-minute modules for educational/institutional use, please contact: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, New Jersey 08543-2053. Telephone toll-free: 1-800-257-5126; Fax: 1-609-275-3767; Web site: <http://www.films.com>

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

The Possible Dream

Often lost amid the cacophony of the 20th century's cannon roar and bomb explosions are the stories of people and movements that used nonviolent resistance against all odds to defeat ferocious opponents — to oust a tyrant in Chile, to thwart the Nazi's designs on Denmark, or to transform a South African political system that had denied rights to people of color. Entire societies from the Philippines to Poland have been radically transformed, suddenly or gradually, by those who refused to submit to arbitrary rule.

Each of these campaigns used nonviolent sanctions — strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, walk-outs, demonstrations — active measures that punished opponents and produced political change. Their ultimate goals were to overturn brutal regimes (South Africa), obstruct invaders (Denmark), or compel rights to be honored (Nashville). All had fewer guns than their opponents. But their cause, in many cases, won the day.

Irrevocably altered were basic ideas about the nature of power. Brutality and violence may enable a corrupt or pernicious regime to intimidate people for a time, but

its very existence would not be possible without the acquiescence of the population. When people unite and decide that they *want* to be free, then the opportunity comes for real change, and when they withdraw their active cooperation from a government, it cannot long stay in power.

Standing Tall

Nonviolent resistance is not for the impatient. Self-discipline was essential to the black college students

whose persistent defiance of local laws and customs effectively paralyzed the city of Nashville. Boycotts may inflict economic pain on an oppressor, but they ask as much of those who launch them. This was never more true than in South Africa, where already desperately poor black citizens opted for self-reliance rather than subsidize an unjust system that depended on their buying power.

If sacrifice and perseverance are the bricks of nonviolent resistance, courage may very well be the mortar. In Argentina in the 1970s, courage was personified by mothers who stood in the central plaza of Buenos Aires

"A Force More Powerful is a veritable manual on how to mount a successful nonviolent resistance movement."
The Los Angeles Times



In 1988, Chileans take to the streets and the airwaves to oppose General Augusto Pinochet. (Program 2)

demanding to know who was responsible for their children's disappearance at the hands of the state. During World War II, gentle wives of Jewish men being rounded up for the Holocaust sat down in front of a city detention center in Berlin and demanded their husbands' release. Incredibly, they succeeded. In the skewed standoff between storm troopers using terrorism and women with no weapons, the rewards of history were with the women.

For some, nonviolence is a personal choice borne of religious belief or moral conviction. For many who have challenged oppression but had no access to the instruments of war, it was the only practical alternative. Danes forced to submit to Nazi occupation during World War II, for example, could never hope to meet the military might of Hitler's henchmen.

Not only is using violence to seek power a high-risk strategy, it also forgoes opportunities that past conflicts have taught us are created through the use of nonviolent sanctions. Underdogs who take up arms risk losing world sympathy. In a boomerang effect, regimes that might otherwise lose credibility can survive by rallying support for quelling violence.

Movers and Shakers

From the gregarious and decisive (Lech Walesa), to the slight and unassuming (Mohandas Gandhi), to the relatively youthful and inexperienced (Mkhuseli Jack), those in the vanguard of popular uprisings may differ in personality and stature, but almost all lead perilous lives, forced to stay one step ahead of the enemy. What Gandhi lacked in physical size, he made up for in relentless organization, calm intelligence, and highly tuned political skills. Jack

worked to rein in volatile supporters of the anti-apartheid effort and make the struggle pay off for thousands of his countrymen.

Conversely, impulsive leadership can prove lethal to promising nonviolent campaigns. The 1989 student democracy movement in China that simultaneously amazed and inspired the world collapsed because its leaders acted rashly. They were slow to recognize just how threatening their demands (freedom of the press, anti-corruption, etc.) were to Communist Party officials. The failure of the democracy movement to fully recover from the Tiananmen Square massacre may say less about the viability of nonviolent action in China than it does about the inadvisability of concentrating people power at a vulnerable point and expecting repressive governments to look the other way.

As Gandhi discovered in India, knowing when to consolidate gains and save the fight for better times is as crucial as knowing when the last traces of power can be kicked over. Action without strategy may be sensational, but it is rarely successful.

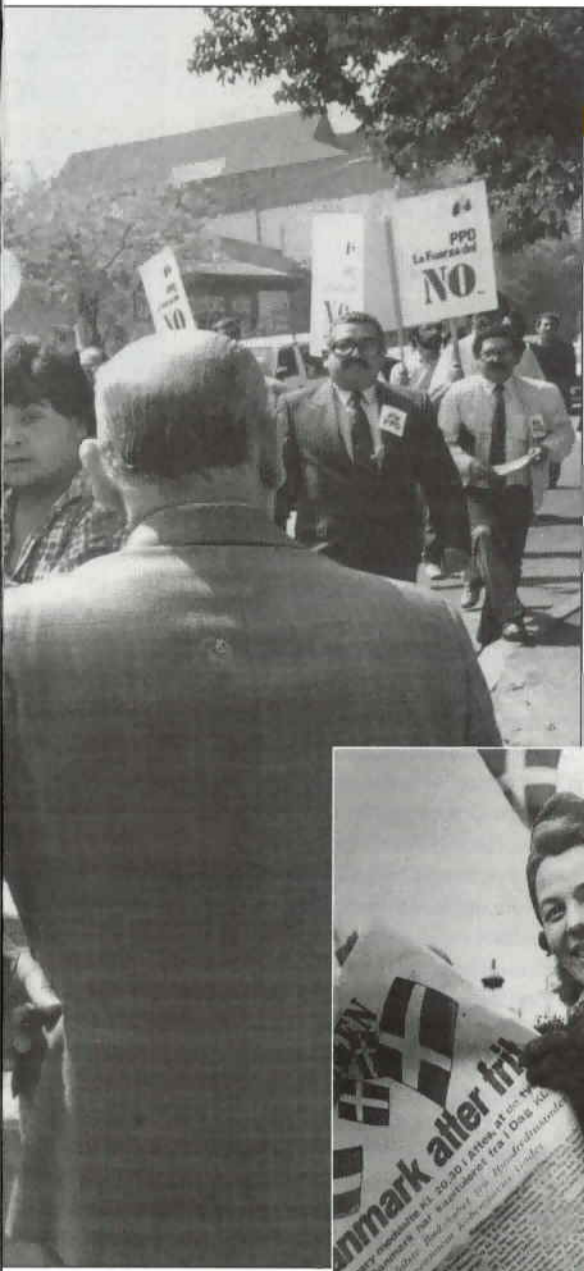
The Road Less Traveled

The record of the 20th century disproves the myth that violence facilitates political change. In fact, outside of the context of war, no major 20th-century struggle that intentionally used violence to unseat an authoritarian or unpopular regime has paved the way for a government that delivered equal justice and honored civil rights.

Fortunately, victories without violence in Chile, South Africa, and other places correct the misconception that only violence can overcome violence, or that the crucial struggles in history have to be settled by force of arms. When people refuse



Communist Party officials in Poland arrive to negotiate with striking Gdansk workers. (Program 2)



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AND
JUSTICE**

Eastern Province Herald



Numerous strategies were used to encourage blacks in South Africa's Port Elizabeth to support the boycott of white-owned businesses. (Program 1)

After five long years of courageous and often dangerous resistance, Danish citizens rejoice at the news of Nazi Germany's surrender. (Program 2)

A.B. Reportagebild

to obey unjust laws, when industry grinds to a halt because people stop working, when armies are no longer feared, the violence that governments use ceases to matter — their power to make people comply disappears. Just as the Russians could not shoot every railway worker who went out on strike in 1905, the Burmese junta today cannot murder every dissident who communicates over the Internet.

Tomorrow

In 1905, challenging absolute rulers like Russia's Tsar Nicholas II without brandishing firearms was regarded as either futile or foolish. But as the 21st century dawns, a new global economic and information system may hand opposition movements an advantage. Within a state, opportunities for nonviolent disruption and non-cooperation increase as information resources, communications, and economic leverage become more accessible.

Similarly, because nongovernmental organizations and the inter-

national news media have become more pervasive and forceful in rallying sympathy for many opposition movements, and because governments cannot afford to lose international legitimacy and the economic privileges that come with it (loans, credits, access to foreign markets), authoritarian regimes may be less inclined to use repressive measures against their own people. Further, as leading nonviolent strategists do their part by providing direct assistance to people in conflicts, nonviolent movements are no longer confined to their own native resources.

If the 20th century has taught us anything, however, it is that developing and applying nonviolent skills stand little chance of success without knowing *how* they have been used before. Those who struggle for justice and human rights in the 21st century will have **A Force More Powerful** and other written and audiovisual materials and resources to confirm the value of nonviolent sanctions. ■

DISCUSSION GUIDE

If You Are the Facilitator

If you are the group facilitator, prepare by watching the programs yourself. Decide whether the members of your discussion group should see the programs before coming together or if they will screen the programs as a group and then discuss them. The series has two programs. Each program is 90 minutes long and has three segments, the beginnings of which are easily identified.

Among the choices you might consider are the following:

- Schedule two discussions — one for each of the two programs.
- Schedule six discussions — one for each of the six segments.
- Schedule one discussion — for the entire series.

If you screen and discuss a complete program on the same evening, you will want to schedule a session of at least two-and-a-half hours for each film. Before starting the program, it is helpful to give group members an idea of what to look for. You might, for example, ask each group member to track the actions or opinions of a specific person in the program.

The decision about whether to screen separately or together also will affect when and how you schedule the discussion groups. If you choose to screen and discuss together, confirm the broadcast time (and repeats) with your local public television station and sched-

ule your group accordingly, or arrange to tape the programs off the air at the time of broadcast.

Before the group meets, you might want to assign "experts" for each segment. Before the discussion, ask the chosen "expert" to present a brief factual synopsis of the incidents depicted. Other pre-discussion assignments might be to read the background information in this guide, to select and read some of the related readings identified below and with each segment profile, or to research current news stories that might have implications for the discussion.

The Discussion

You may find that your group is stimulated enough by the program that a discussion will take off on its own. You do not need to set many ground rules, but you should make sure that only one person speaks at a time so that everyone who wants to speak is heard. A good way to get people involved in the discussion is to ask them if they agree or disagree with others' statements. Also ask "Why?" As group members react to various comments, make sure they are reacting to the ideas and not to the people in the group.

To lead a more structured discussion, select from among the key themes those that you think might particularly interest the group. Then select from among the questions that follow those that you think would most stimulate members of the group to a good discussion. Feel free to rephrase the questions in your own words. Note that

additional questions that are more pertinent to specific situations appear with each segment profile.

1. In the *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Gene Sharp, Senior Scholar, The Albert Einstein Institution, categorizes 198 methods of nonviolent action under six main headings: nonviolent protest and persuasion; social non-cooperation; economic non-cooperation (e.g., boycotts and strikes); political non-cooperation; and nonviolent intervention. As you view **A Force More Powerful**, take note of the various sanctions depicted and try to categorize them using this system. Discuss which seem to be most effective and under what circumstances each works best.

2. **A Force More Powerful** profiles several seemingly ordinary individuals who by their courage, sense of strategy, and decisiveness in conflict, produced significant changes in their societies that affected millions of people. What characteristics did these people have in common? What propelled them out of their everyday lives to become activists?

3. The six stories told in the series reflect change in both democracies and military dictatorships. Which form of government is harder to change? Why?

4. Each of the movements profiled in **A Force More Powerful** was galvanized by strongly felt injustices or an outrageous act of repression. What circumstances do you think

would impel you to disobey the law and resist the government?

5. What parallels do you find among the six stories featured in **A Force More Powerful**? What major differences do you find?

6. What role should the United States play in supporting and encouraging nonviolent citizen movements for human rights or democracy?

7. Every movement has both costs and benefits. Select several stories featured in **A Force More Powerful**, and analyze them from the perspective of the costs and benefits of nonviolent action and violent repression. Factor in the differences between short-term gains and long-term gains, and discuss which movements seem to be most successful.

8. What conflicts are going on today in which nonviolent methods could be effective?

Additional Reading

Ackerman, Peter and Christopher Kruegler. *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994.

Sharp, Gene. *Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Porter Sargeant, 1973.

Tarrow, Sid. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collection Action and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

