

## The Power of a Peaceful Approach

Many trying to further a cause are willing to resort to violent methods. However, standing up against an unjust authority doesn't have to mean the use of force. There are many ways of gaining support without causing harm. Some believe that violence is the easiest path to improvement, but this may not be the case. By advocating for change through peaceful means, one can effectively spread awareness, spark dialogue, and lead the way to positive outcomes. Nonviolence is the necessary and ideal method to promote one's cause.

An efficient way to spread awareness is through peaceful protest. It's commonly believed that violence is a fast way to gain attention over a topic. That may be true, but with a pacific approach, people may be more willing to listen, while aggressive protestors can often be ignored. While Mahatma Gandhi describes different ways of fighting oppression, including his own. In his writing of "On Civil Disobedience", he mentions that. "One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process...Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline" (Gandhi). Violent methods could not only result in an audience turning its back, but could overall end in conflict. If a group of people is less willing to listen, the only progress made by aggression is further angering opposers. The writing that inspired Gandhi's work was also very similar in its approach. In "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," Henry David Thoreau describes his views. He states that, "For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever" (Thoreau). Many worry that a peaceful approach isn't enough to get through to their audience. However, Thoreau argues that a nonviolent action

speaks louder than a violent one. It goes a long way and is a step closer to the goal of improvement. If these actions gain enough momentum, they may even be enough to convince higher powers capable of making needed changes.

Pacifist methods open the doorway to communication and peaceful negotiation. Though some government officials may be hesitant to negotiate peacefully, nonviolent protest will prove that activists are willing to work with them, and can coerce them into changing sides. In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "Three Ways of Meeting Oppression", his memoir of the Montgomery bus boycott. It reads, "Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. A voice echoes through time saying to every potential Peter, "Put up your sword." History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations that failed to follow this command" (King). Just like King states, opposing groups must work together in order to make true change. Only by working together can a movement reach its full potential. In the same passage, King also says, "But in spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem; it merely creates new and more complicated ones" (King). In the end, the only thing violence does is make a mess. On the contrary, nonviolence fosters dialogue and convinces others to join the struggle. Instead of seeing opposers as enemies, they should be seen as allies because without

them, change isn't possible. One's method not only affects who's willing to work with them, but also how they're seen in the eyes of the public.

Nonviolent means are more likely to gain positive support by keeping a moral high ground and earning sympathy. Some believe violence should be used as a last option, but it merely cause more problems. Not only is the use of force ineffective for gaining voluntary support, it may even further opposing views. In Martin Luther King's "Three Ways of Meeting Oppression", he says, "Through nonviolent resistance the Negro will be able to rise to the noble height of opposing the unjust system while loving the perpetrators or the system...In the end, it is not a struggle between people at all, but a tension between justice and injustice. Nonviolent resistance is not aimed at oppressors but against oppression" (King). Seeing people fighting for improvement through peaceful means can have a lasting impact on others, and is more likely to change someone's mind. One can protest their needs while remaining kind to others. Henry Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" also states that, "What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn" (Thoreau). The importance of nonviolence is that it breaks the cycle of hatred and retaliation, demonstrating a moral high ground to the eyes of the public. With this method, others are more likely to be sympathetic and support a cause.

The most effective way to further one's movement is through nonviolent methods. Like Gandhi said in "On Civil Disobedience", "No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war" (Gandhi). Instead of resorting to violence, one should welcome their enemies with love, because when people resort to violence, it escalates, stifling creativity and further distancing polar opposite views. In contrast, when people listen to one another, they are more open to suggestions, welcoming creative solutions and promoting everyone's inclusive

ideas. If people can't have a civil discussion to work out issues without making war, nothing will ever change. Together we can accomplish anything. Together we can change the world for the better.

#### Works Cited

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