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INTRODUCTION

Publishing a book on nonviolence, particularly one titled a sustainable vision for schools, may seem a bit romantic, at least out of touch with reality, during times seeing the most horrific gun violence and predictable school tragedy in the United States (hereinafter “U.S.”) during our lifetime. Non-American readers may smirk at the idea that Americans could have anything to do with nonviolence given the United States military industrial complex and its legacy. The editors are gratified that authors representing nine countries responded to our call for chapters. The reality is that most privileged human beings take nonviolence for granted and only professors of peacebuilding appreciate that nonviolence represents the heart of human existence. Without it, most of us could not survive. Human beings have strived for generations to create, sustain and improve the systems that create and maintain nonviolence. We all benefit. Publishing a book that helps many appreciate its working components and how we can work individually and collectively to improve will benefit many.

The audiences for this book include professors and students of political science and peace studies as well as the professors of all the disciplines represented in this book: criminal justice, public administration, international relations, conflict resolution, education (teacher education and educational leadership), play therapy, English and law. Most disciplines have valuable contributions to make to sustainable nonviolence. While readers have historically looked to behavioral sciences (sociology, psychology, anthropology) for guidance and insight, the truth is that the applied disciplines like conflict resolution, child development, criminal justice and social work provide those challenged by violence practical field tested guidance.

The editors bring careers effectively reducing, confronting and preventing violence to this book. Swaranjit Singh is a retired lieutenant colonel, leading combat troops and serving India’s army for over twenty years. He has the rare distinction of serving in all the insurgency infested areas of India. Nancy Erbe represented the Minneapolis Public Schools regarding all disciplinary and special education concerns including weapons and violence; then designed a treatment program for repeat violent juvenile offenders that dramatically reduced their violent behavior by over fifty percent in less than six months. As a result, she was asked to teach Managing the Angry and Dangerous Client to graduate students of social work at the University of Denver.

They also bring years of peace work to this book. Swaranjit Singh has a masters in Gandhian and peace studies and teaches breath yoga and mindfulness. Nancy Erbe has taught in peace studies for almost twenty years, at the University of California Berkeley, University of Oslo International Summer School and California State University Dominguez Hills. She was the founding director of the Rotary Center
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for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution at UC-Berkeley. They both helped launch the first peace masters program in the Arab world.

Gandhi first introduced nonviolence (ahimsa in ancient traditional Indian civilization) to the world when he embraced truth and love and showed the world how they might be practiced as part of political strategy potent enough to topple the British empire. Nonviolence philosophy embraces all circumstances where there is no desire (natural or acquired) to kill/harm humans, animals, all forms of life and their environment. This viewpoint is based on moral and spiritual principles where there is complete absence of violence in all aspects of life. The nonviolence concepts have been used to realize political and social objectives by bringing changes in society, organizations and nations. Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and Desmond Tutu all used this philosophy successfully as an effective alternative to violence/aggression/oppression to achieve desired political/social goals. Most recently, the Arab Spring, including the Nobel Peace Prize winning Tunisians, emulated. The nonviolence political philosophy has also been referred to as passive resistance, civil resistance, noncooperation, civil disobedience, and nonviolent direct action. A new term is evolving, creative civil disobedience, where unique methods are employed. The philosophy hinges around willingly accepting self-suffering to bring about change in one’s opponent/aggressor by challenging the oppressor’s moral conscience; thus making him aware of his unjust/violent actions. This kind of activism heightens awareness in society; ideally transforming oppressing structures. The transformation in society, including the society favoring the oppressive structures, starts exerting pressure on the oppressor to change. Gandhi termed it as winning over brute force by soul force. Gandhi not only saw nonviolence as a political strategy for justice but also as a soulful, sustainable and spacious multicultural way of living where the environment and all living beings receive consideration and respect. He had expressed that it was not enough to just throw out the British and then get replaced by Indians with similar British-styled psyche. Gandhi wanted the new government/system to be deeply rooted in spiritual and moral principles where the government worked as a servant of the people and not as their master. Ideally, Gandhi aimed even higher: learning to rule one’s own mind and thus removing the need of governance (Gandhi, 1938).

Scholars have studied the strategic use of nonviolence ever since (Sharp, 2012). More importantly, communities around the world, struggling against ruthless dictators and other injustice, have demonstrated its effectiveness again and again (Ackerman & Duvall, 2001). In terms of preparing societies for democratic transition, it proves much more effective and sustainable than violence (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2012). The reader just needs to imagine the nation states who have bankrupted themselves in the military arms race to begin to appreciate nonviolence’s viability.

Most readers will not be aware that Gandhi stood for much more than India’s liberation or the harmonious coexistence of Hindus and Muslims. They do not know that he strongly rejected the Hindu caste system and even eventually advocated for women’s equality, dignity and respect. He critiqued Western civilization and rejected its industrial capitalism which was exclusively based on profit-making and thus resulted in concentration of wealth in the hands of few. The system exploited the poor and caused more poverty and suffering to the workers. He was strongly against the use of machines where it caused unemployment. In these days of transnational corporate corruption, exploitation and crime, his words once again prove prophetic.

Gandhi was a strong proponent of India’s village life and wanted to transform India through his constructive program where he wanted to remove the ills of the Hindu caste system. Long before our back to the land and sustainable living movements, Gandhi started an agricultural community in South Africa and later lived simply on the land in a spiritual community. He believed strongly that individuals
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learning to grow their own food and spin their own cloth was the route to independence and liberation from exploitative suppliers and trade. His vision of sustainable nonviolence seems to the opposite of the world’s growing and interdependent global market. Does his critique explain and predict the outrageous and growing distance between the world’s wealthiest and poorest? Eradication of the middle class? It resonates strongly with those advocating for reduced energy consumption and increased health through consumption of local agricultural products.

Historically, if one studies ancient Hindu concepts and texts, nonviolence was and is a whole spiritual way of living focused on cultivating inner nonviolence more than external. Readers who practice yoga will be somewhat familiar. Like any meditation spiritual practice, it teaches disciplines for physical, mental and emotional health as well as healthy relationships.

The editors believe that the cultures we are taught from birth are instrumental to whether a particular person, group or community experiences and is educated as a child and youth regarding nonviolence. It is no accident that Swaranjit Singh is intimately acquainted with Gandhi’s legacy and relevant Buddhist, Jain and Hindu teachings and practices. Nancy Erbe was born to the children of Norwegian immigrants to the United States. Their birth place was the nation that awards the Nobel Peace prize and is the most trusted mediating nation state in the world. All, however, can benefit from studying and learning, whatever their age or circumstances. The diversity of this book attests to this universal truth.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Section 1, “Emerging Visions for Nonviolence: Transforming Violence, Eradicating Oppression, Building Resilience, and Inspiring Through Tragedy,” includes chapters authored by scholars from two BRIC countries, the multicultural democracies of Brazil and India as well as a professor of negotiation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding who has taught in and researched both Brazil and India. They are mutually challenged by horrific violence: the Delhi gang rape as one example. Brazil’s urban violence is some the worst in the world. At the same time, they have vibrant civil societies organizing nonviolently as they rally against systemic corruption (in India through the Lokpal, a quasi legal ombuds like role) and on behalf of their democracies.

In Chapter 1, Swaranjit Singh and Nancy Erbe of California State University Dominguez Hills, U.S.A., stress and explain how adult modeling and mentoring is needed in all key societal arenas and that youth can be taught nonviolence at levels of conflict: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup (family, tribe, culture, religion) intergroup (between cultures, religions and other groups) and within other complex systems: organizations and communities as primary examples. They introduce the theories and field tested skills of integrative negotiation, mindful mediation and other third party facilitated conflict resolution.

In Chapter 2, Yago Vieira de Oliveira Almeida of Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, demands even more: the eradication and transformation of all oppressive systems, including discrimination around the world. While his explicit focus is prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender peoples, the spirit and message is far reaching and clear. Wherever hatred is allowed or tolerated, violence against self and others is nurtured.

In Chapter 3, Christina McLaughlin (Northern Ireland) continues the theme of chapter 1: the power of adult mentors in promoting and otherwise creating nonviolent schools and societies. She shares her model of play therapy as an intervention to help children and youth develop resilience, positive identity and affiliations in the midst of violence. Adult intervention to help children identify with positive resources is central.
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In Chapter 4, Wayne Jones of Virginia State University, U.S.A., reviews historic violence and non-violence with a focus on the U.S., particularly the recent Charleston tragedy. He elaborates his vision for the U.S. with specific steps-transformations that are needed. As he acknowledges, eradicating violence completely is unlikely but any progress with nonviolence matters. Those who have endured tragic violence like those in the Charleston church can become our greatest inspirations and sources of pragmatic wisdom.

Section 2, “African Visions For Nonviolence: Just Policing, Cross-Tribal Sports, and Nonviolent Teaching,” features three chapters. Countries like Kenya and South Africa are repeatedly challenged by tragic violence, terrorism and the tough to transform legacies of colonialism and apartheid. If readers wish to study real world case studies of how colonial powers implanted, manipulated and otherwise created the conditions that create violence, there is dark and disturbing evidence here: systemic discrimination and oppression, dividing people (tribes) against each other...the list could go on and on. Anthropologists of war continue to show and expose the contemporary political manipulation of all those with power seeking to mobilize for selfish ends. Learning to protect themselves and each other from such ruthless exploitation and harm is one of global citizenry’s most pressing tasks.

Chapter 5 starts the section examining the professional role most often equated with violence apart from the military: the police. Citizens in all nation states need to be constantly monitoring their police to ensure fair public service. Impartial ombuds like investigators also play vital roles to this end. In Chapter 5, Mbekezeli Comfort Mkhize and Phathuthshedzo Madumi of Stellenbosch University, South Africa, describe how citizens can benefit from studying the power of effective nonviolent protest as their violent protests are provoking and even justifying police violence. Destructive reciprocity benefits no one.

In Chapter 6, Mukurima Muriuki, California State University Dominguez Hills and Kenya, describes how soccer in Kenya is not only a beloved sport but a vehicle for bringing young males together from conflicting tribes and criminal gangs. They learn to work together not only collaboratively but democratically. Optimally, they develop winning team strategy learning from wins and losses.

Chapter 7 goes even further, focusing on one of the most influential models and guides in children’s lives when they have the opportunity and privilege of schooling: their teachers. In Chapter 7, Simon Taukeni, Catholic AIDS Action, Namibia, argues on behalf of nonviolent teaching. One can imagine how widespread practice around the world could potently transform our violent world and advance nonviolence.

Section 3, “European Visions for Nonviolence: Honoring Student Voice, Peer Mediation With Aikido Defense and Countrywide Nonviolence Curriculum,” also has three chapters. It focuses on the part of the world many would describe as the most accepting, welcoming, liberal and progressive, at least regarding those seeking safe prosperous homes and social benefits – Europe. Yet in recent times, European nations are struggling with hate crimes, terrorism and urban violence, especially those who have welcomed refugees from the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

In Chapter 8, Juan Carlos Torrego, Carlos Monge Lopez, and David Montalvo Saborido, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain, advocate students and their voice as an essential means to learning more about the violence they are experiencing in their daily lives at schools and in society. While their focus are schools in Spain, their perspective is universally valuable. Students can be educated and helped to detect early signs of violence. If they are provided with trusted adult relationships where they feel encouraged and safe to share their observations and concerns, they will increasingly play critical roles in co-creating and sustaining nonviolence.

Chapter 9 describes the struggles of one of the most progressive, Sweden. Author Giuseppina Wright who grew up in Sweden in a German-Italian family, California State University Dominguez Hills pro-
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Poses nonviolence curriculum throughout Swedish schools to teach students how to coexist peacefully and productively in their increasingly conflicted and complex world.

While the role of peer mediation is not advised or even appropriate (legal) with violent conflict and victimization like bullying, research has shown that student mediators help reduce school misbehavior and suspensions and heighten school engagement. It is one popular way of engaging student voice. In Chapter 10, Luca dal Pubel, Nicoletta Casale, and Alessia Cerchia, Italy, describe such a program in Italian schools with the brilliant addition of aikido: the Japanese martial arts that teaches the weak and attacked to counter without force. It would be a breakthrough in nonviolence if victims of bullying and violence can be taught to protect and esteem themselves nonviolently.


Chapter 11 describes programs where youth are taking leadership roles in teaching nonviolence to youth in gang infested and violence ridden urban neighborhoods and co-designing, researching and building an environmentally sustainable university. Dian Mitrayani, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and Robert Donald Peel, University of Hawaii Manoa, U.S.A., stress these programs are emulating the best of teaching and learning. With adult mentoring and oversight, youth are not only being heard, respected and understood but are making a significant contribution to nonviolence.

Chapter 12 introduces restorative discipline through schools in North America. Anthony Normore and Brian Jarrett, California State University Dominguez Hills, both Canadian, describe how student criminal offenders, violent and other, who admit responsibility for their crime (school infraction) can meet with willing victims and concerned impacted community, negotiate repair of harm or make amends. Since research shows that harsh punishment teaches violence rather than nonviolence, such a nonviolent shift in school discipline, together with nonviolent teaching, has great potential to further nonviolence in societies worldwide. Furthermore, research shows that offenders doing the victim offender mediation described above are less likely to commit additional crimes than those who are punished in traditional ways.

In Chapter 13, Linda Groff, California State University, Dominguez Hills, shares her lifetime of knowledge teaching and studying nonviolence to introduce readers to what is happening in the world today from a traditional peace and justice studies perspective. Her visions can be found in the referenced work.

In Chapter 14, David Overly of Citrus College, U.S.A., describes how he developed a new peace studies program at his community college (where he has taught English for many years). He details his experience. Ideally, his rich experience and student evaluation will inspire others to follow in his footsteps. Every community seeking to grow and nurture nonviolence would benefit from peace studies.

REFERENCES


