ISPP Summer Meeting
Amsterdam 1999

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USING CONFRONTATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: MAHATMA MOHANDAS GANDHI, REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR, AND THE REPUDIATION OF VENGEANCE

The twentieth century has been witness to many movements for social change, at least two of which gained international significance, for their massive campaigns, grounded in non-violent action, which made possible the ultimate success of efforts for change. The campaign in India, for independence from England, and the campaign in the United States, for an end to legalized segregation share much in common. This paper examines the non-violent parts of these movements, the relationship between their overall design to their warrior-like attributes, and also the religious nature of the leadership.

The campaign in India was a multifaceted movement spanning more than half a century. Non-violence, as mobilized by Mohandas Gandhi, became visible around the world in a series of campaigns led by Gandhi[1] and others between 1910 and 1949. Indians achieved Independence on August 15, 1947.

The non-violent campaign in the United States was shorter. Many date its peak years from 1955 to 1968. Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were the most visible advocates for non-violence, though King, like Gandhi, was just one of many who leaders, each of whom pursued different strategies for their campaigns. King's personal debt to the Indian experience is widely known. It is probably less well known that political and spiritual leaders in the African American community had become deeply engaged in the Indian movement from the moment it began.[2] King's work developed among people already well aware of non-violence under Gandhi's leadership, and aware perhaps also of how valuable the strategy had been when the fight was against overwhelming odds.[3]

I see the end of nonviolent confrontation in the Civil Rights "campaign," as 1968, the year that King was assassinated. Laws enacted to guarantee civil rights had been passed earlier in the decade, and segregation was by no means eliminated, but the dynamics of the movement changed with King's death. I date the end of the Indian non-violence

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1 In the 1940s conflict erupted among Indians of different religious affiliations, and at the very end of Gandhi's life, he returned to his time-honored tactics, specifically the fast, to end the sectarian violence.

2 Kapur, Sudarshan, *Raising Up a Prophet*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1992

3 Clearly, neither campaign had a chance as a purely military endeavor, ore were there any signs that the opponents were interested in change.

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movement to 1948, to Gandhi's death. Both deaths marked an ending, because these two men, whose lives were the embodiment of a heroic and yet sacrificial and sacred vision of human nature, were central to the change achieved by their respective movements.[4]

This paper will examine the two movements' dynamics, as they engaged in non-violent confrontation with a violent and intransigent opposition. The ethics which bound and mobilized campaigners in non-violence -- their loyalty, their obedience to directives, their commitment to their cause -- had much in common with the ethics of soldiers at war. Given the associations one might make between pacifism and the gentle, quiet life, it may be surprising that many features of Gandhi's and King's ethics, of their tactics and their exhortations to followers, bear a distinct resemblance to key ingredients of the ethics, strategies and rhetorical imperatives of wartime.[5]

Organizing strategies in non-violence, particularly the tactics that kept supporters together, including marching, campaigning, and territorial agendas, resembled the kinds of plans a general at war might make. The strengths of the nonviolent campaigners echo wartime human resilience in the sense of a public commitment to courage in the face of danger and a knowing willingness to encounter suffering. The military analogy diverges from confrontational non-violence because the non-violent train to redirect their urge for vengeance into the courage to face continued self- suffering. Gandhi and King's spiritual teaching fostered this kind of fearlessness and transformed the "battlefields" of non-violence into sacred space.

Before embarking further on descriptions of the course of non-violence in India, and in the United States, it is important to acknowledge that in neither place can one attribute the changes which occurred solely to the campaigners who used non-violence. In India, important ground-work had been laid by hundreds of terrorist operations small and large.[6] Even under non-violence, physical brutality was capable of getting out of hand. More significant, however, was the fact that even as they were campaigning, Gandhi and King had counter-parts, men and movements willing to resort to violence. History looks back, and identifies the Moslems in both places as one source of violence. Jinnah, who later became president of Pakistan, seems often to have been impatient with Gandhi. Malcolm X, in the United States, was often an advocate of more dramatic measures. These men

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[4] "Performed" might be a better word. Neither King nor Gandhi was, nor believed himself to be the ideal in reality that their followers imagined. Both, however, made substantial efforts, hence my final choice of word.

[5] I single out western pacifism here, because the Shambala notion in Buddhism, and the martial arts training in Tai Chi, Aikido and Peokeolean Kung Fu, for example, recognize the strength, confrontation and training necessary for true non-violence.

[6] Gandhi's post-World War I attempt at widespread non-co-operation ended in carnage, in the gardens at Amritsar, which led him to suspend that particular operation in 1919.

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were not alone, and Moslems were not the only source of violence. Many movements for social change in this century have been shaped by the revolutionary traditions of the Bolsheviks, and by the combative traditions of guerrilla fighters as by non-violent campaigns for change. The people of India, and the people of the United States also could chose among different paths towards change. In India, important ground-work had been laid by hundreds of terrorist operations small and large. Even under non-violence, physical brutality was capable of getting out of hand.[7] More significant, however, was the fact that even as they were campaigning, Gandhi and King had counter-parts, men and movements willing to resort to violence. Jinnah, who later became president of Pakistan, was visibly impatient with Gandhi. Malcolm X, in the United States, was often an advocate of more violent measures than King espoused.[8]

It will probably never be possible to measure how much of the change, ultimately, is attributable to each of the strategies. That, anyway, is not the question for this paper. This paper takes up the question: Do the ethics, the tactics and the demands of non-violence as used in India and the United States resemble the ethics and tactics and demands of war?

The nature of warfare, and the qualities it takes to wage a violent campaign successfully have been much debated. The elements singled out in this paper are unlikely to surprise the reader. My particular theoretical framework derives from earlier research into how and when people at war finally become willing to negotiate an enduring cease-fire.[9] The peace-making issue has an obverse side: How can people at war manage to postpone cease-fire as long as they do? What enables people to keep on fighting in the face of the intense suffering that any war imposes on warrior and civilian alike.[10] Searching for answers to these questions leads one to the ethical standards to which warriors hold themselves accountable, it leads one to look at the ways people are mobilized and kept organized, and it leads one to the nature of human courage resilience in the midst of excruciating suffering.

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[7] Gandhi's post-World War I attempt at widespread non-co-operation ended in carnage, in the gardens at Amritsar, which led him to suspend that particular operation in 1919.

[8] Interestingly enough, in retrospect, the success of both movements is more commonly attributed to their non-violent elements.

[9] Currently being written up in a book entitled *Fragile Peace*. Estimated completion date, fall 1999.

[10] Elaine Scarry's *The Body In Pain* , Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, set the starting point for this analysis. Her notion that war is, above all, a contest in suffering, and that the war will end when the suffering becomes unbearable, proved highly illuminating. Cease-fire, in fact, depends on several additional factors combining in a more chaotic than controlled fashion. But that's material for my book, as yet unfinished.

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Military Ethics

Warriors understand and justify their own actions by an ethical code which allows them to undertake, in wartime, behaviors and experiences which would be illegal and intolerable in peace. Jane Jacobs' book, *Systems of Survival*,[11] draws a distinction, useful to us here, between the ethic of peace-time commerce and the ethic of "guardianship." "Guardians" are those whose work is justified by the understanding that at times humans simply "take," rather than "trade" for what they want. When someone threatens to "take," the "guardian" must mobilize to stop them. "Guardians" can also decide that the time has come to "take." War is an obvious attempt to take, by force but here is Martin Luther King advocating taking as well:

> My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture, but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.
>
> We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. . .[12]

King's opponents, for including Police Chief Bull Connor of Birmingham, and Judge Hare,[13] and Sheriff Jim Clark of Selma were equally clear:

> Standing for reelection in 1961, Connor sought to consolidate his position among racial extremists by offering the KKK a fifteen-to-twenty minute "open season"

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[11] Jacobs, Jane, *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994, seems to suggest that these ethics might have some universal, biologically determined basis. Her source material , however, is almost entirely from western, often popular sources. Without trying to evaluate the universality of what she suggests, I find her arguments very useful in understanding how people at war can switch so readily from the ethics they use in peace time, which would judge so many acts of war as repugnant, horrific.

[12] King Jr., Martin Luther , "Letter from Birmingham Jail" April 16, 1963.

[13] Chestnut, J. L. Jr., *Black in Selma*, New York, Farrer Strauss and Giroux, 1990, makes a convincing argument that the "white trash" bullies were exploited by southern aristocrats, like the Judge, to be the visible voice of an oppressive system whose prime beneficiaries were the planter class.

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> on the Freedom Riders, free from police intervention when they rolled into Birmingham in May 1961. Connor won reelection in a landslide.[14]

This was a struggle in which whites would kill rather than allow others to "take away" their right to live in segregated communities. Gandhi lived in a similar situation in India: the British would not voluntarily "give" independence; Indians had nothing they could trade for it; it must be taken.

Physical violence having actually begun, people can adopt a system of aspirations and values quite distinct from the standards of their everyday lives. The imperatives that guide the warrior, that prevent defeatism and the escape to a safe place, cluster broadly into three groups: love (both patriotic and personal), honor and vengeance. Why do I single out patriotism/love, honor and vengeance? These three constitute the explanations given repeatedly in war diaries, in leaders' speeches, in the mass media and in military propaganda to demonstrate both the legitimacy and the inevitability of the resort to war. These three also appear again and again, across historical time, and in a remarkably wide range of different cultural contexts. Today's mass media, newspapers and movies in particular, provide ample evidence of the continuing, wide pervasiveness of these three archaic sounding, core ethics. Non-violent campaigners exhibited similar kinds of love/ loyalties and a comparable commitment to honor. Their paths diverged from military men when the urge for vengeance struck.

Love/loyalty

Love can be manifest as patriotism, love of the community for which one fights. It can also be manifest as love for one's comrades, the other soldiers in the trench, the companions on the march. Patriotic fervor repeatedly inspires the willingness to become a fighter, in particular in time of war. Patriot-like passions also clearly captivated those yearning for social change. Both movements fought for an idealized new nation. King's speech, "I have a dream" remains to this day an archetypal piece of patriotic rhetoric.

The movement campaigners felt love also, for those alongside them in the struggle. Americans from the North still look back nostalgically to their days as students on the Freedom Rides (1961), when they traveled south, desegregating buses. Blacks had a more intimate relationship to it all. The people they marched with were their neighbors: the campaign led to loving meetings in jail, intense congregational strategy sessions, terrifying companionship on the march to Jackson, or crossing the bridge at Selma, and walking up the courthouse steps again and again.

Gandhi held Ahimsa to be a central tenet. Ahimsa is a complex, but all encompassing kind of love directed equally towards enemy and friend, which keeps us always walking

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[14] Klarman, Michael J., "How Brown changed race relations: The backlash thesis." *The Journal of American History,* June 994, vol. 81, no. 1 p. 83.

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forwards no matter what obstacles arise to turn one back, and yet it is not a painless sentiment. As Gandhi puts it:

> I admit that there is always a possibility of one's mistaking right from wrong and *vice versa* (italics original), but often one learns to recognize wrong only through unconscious error. . . . if a man fails to follow the light within fear of public opinion, or for any other similar reason, he would never be able to know right from wrong and, in the end, lose all distinction between the two. That is why the poet has sung:
>
> The pathway of love is the ordeal of fire,
> The shrinkers turn away from it.
>
> The pathway of *Ahimsa*, that is of love, one often has to tread all alone.[15]

Repeatedly, the governments in power and other opponents of change in India and the United States questioned the patriotism of the movements. King was reviled as a "communist," while Gandhi was belittled for his refusal to participate in the clothing and life-style of "civilized" men. Antagonistic visions of patriotism were to be found at the core of both movements for social change, just as they are in any war.

Honor

Honor, and its opposite, humiliation, are pivotal to combatants in war.[16] The connection between honor and combat "etiquette," is in our commonsense: The soldier must comport himself well in the face of danger, to uphold his honor. In fact, in the midst of combat, soldiers often collapse, other soldiers forget their pride. The terror of the actual experience brings compassion to the fore, but still one must not shirk one's obligations. As Gandhi puts it:

> Much though we have advanced in shedding our fear of imprisonment, there is still a disinclination to seek it and anxiety to avoid it. We must . . . be anxious almost to find ourselves in the gaols (sic) of the Government. It must be positively irksome, if not painful for us, to enjoy a so-called freedom under a Government we seek to end or mend.[17]

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[15] Gandhi, M.K., *To the Perplexed*, ed. Hindgorani, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966. p. 143.

[16] I am grateful to James Gilligan, author of *Violence*, New York, Putnam, 1996, for giving me pre-publication access to his work, which makes it possible to understand the connection between the resort to violence, and the fear of humiliation.

[17] Gandhi, *Stonewalls do not a Prison Make*, compiled and edited by V.B. Kher, Ahemdabad 14, Navajivan Publishing House.

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Humiliation, the threat or the experience of being humiliated becomes the spur that makes one insist on risking jail. King, writing from the jail in Birmingham, puts it in family terms:

> Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." . . . . [But] when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your sixyearold daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a fiveyear old son who is asking, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a crosscountry drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored," when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John" and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs." . . . .
> There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over.[18] [19] ’

Time and again, King and Gandhi exhorted their followers to remember their obligations, and to repudiate any suggestion that they lacked the standing due to people of honor. Though the whites might want to humiliate them, in the ways King described, blacks had the right to claim standing comparable to any citizen in the US. When Indians marched and eschewed trains and cars, they were reclaiming their traditional ways, not suffering the indignities of the primitive.

Vengeance

In war, love and honor are joined by a third key ethical construct: vengeance. Both at an individual level, and at the level of nation or army, vengeance can spur one on. Vengeance is inspired by the desire for justice and taking revenge can seem like respect for the dead, a way to memorialize. The non-violent campaigners, unlike men at war, repudiated vengeance. They trained intensely to develop fearlessness, to tame the visceral vengeful response, and they developed a wide repertoire of alternatives to vengeance, other actions that offered an adequate response to death.

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18 MLK, "Birmingham Jail."

19 I take Gandhi's phrase "must be positively irksome" to refer to honor; King is explicit in using the word "humiliation," as he lists example after example of what a modern black kid would call "the dis," the term stands for disrespect, and is accepted as an adequate justification for violence.

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Myrlie Evers felt the visceral sides of vengeance the night her husband was assassinated:

> "There he lay. I screamed, and people came out. . .
> People from the neighborhood began to gather, and there were some whose color happened to be white. I don't think I have ever hated as much in my life as I did at that moment. I can recall wanting to have a machine gun in my hands and to stand there and mow them all down. I can't explain the depth of my hatred at that point. . . . Medgar's influence has directed me in terms of dealing with that hate. He told me that hate was not a healthy thing."[20]

Many had found themselves unable to respond to Medgar Evers death peacefully.

> At Evers' funeral, about a thousand black youths spontaneously marched down Capitol Street, the main downtown business route. They were soon joined by many of their elders. Police ordered the crowd to disperse. Instead, rocks and bottles flew. "We want the killer!" people shouted.[21]

At their best, the non-violent groups eschewed the language of hatred: Christians turned the other check, Hindus remembered Ahimsa. These clear behavioral injunctions enabled each afflicted person to turn away from the urge for vengeance as the enactment of wild justice.[22]

Reacting against the death of Jamie Lee Johnson in Selma in 1965, King kept up confrontation but refused to kill -- instead he and thousands of others fearlessly risked death on the march Selma to Montgomery, the march which finally forced President Johnson to speak out for the passage of the voting rights act. The struggle to avoid the violent response was never easy. In the section below on fearlessness, the rhetoric of non-violence, which made it possible, will receive fuller elucidation.

Detour for a discussion of Gender

In wartime, most military units are made up of young people. Young men seem particularly suited to be warriors in violence. Others watch scared, when boys as young

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[20] Williams, Juan, *Eyes on the Prize America's Civil Rights Years 1954-65*, New York, Penguin, 1988, p. 224.

[21] *Eyes on the Prize*, p. 225.

[22] Jacoby, Susan, *Wild Justice,* New York, Harper and Row, 1983

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as thirteen wield rifles in Liberia[23], carry bombs for the IRA or throw stones in an Intifada. These young, though, are men.

One of the striking features of both the non-violent campaigns, in India and the US, is that many women were actively involved. Fanny Lou Hamer and Rosa Parks remain famous today. Since many of King's aides were ordained ministers , they were men, but they were well aware of how much their actions depended on women.

> Typically, individual black men were the primary victims of intimidation, job loss, violence or even loss of their lives. So, many black men hid behind the macho pose that they could not be non-violent. . . . .
> It was always frustrating that we couldn't get more men, especially young men to participate. . . .
> And tonight was no different; we still lacked men. But much to my surprise, we had a cadre of determined[24], non-violent warriors, even though they were mostly women and teenagers.

Gandhi's movement functioned in a different cultural climate, in a caste system in which status mattered so much that in some ways gender mattered less. Certainly, Gandhi himself had more women in his intimate community than were in the leadership of the SCLC. These women were visible publicly at the march on the Salt works at Dharasana, in May of 1930. As each rank of marchers advanced on the gates they were struck by the troops on guard, and pulled to safety and nursing[25] care at once by the women who were thus integral to the success of the entire project.

In India and among African Americans the centrality of women cannot be in doubt. Andrew Young had to learn this under difficult conditions:

> That night we discovered that Dorothy [Cotton] was a feminist long before there was a National Organization for Women. She refused to give us her car. In fact she was furious and said:
> " I don't need you all; I'll go get them out of jail by myself."
> Realizing we had an unreasonable female on our hands, Bevel and I jumped into the car as Dorothy drove out of Birmingham toward Mississippi at speeds in

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23 New Yorker: March 23, 1998. "Our Children are Killing Us" a story of children being kidnapped in Uganda to fight in a campaign funded by Sudan. In this case, girls are kidnapped too, partly to become fighters and killers (proportions 8:1 in the recovery center), but also, of course, for the sexual gratification of the fighters..

24 Young, Andrew, *A Way Out of No Way.* Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1994, p. 92

25 With hindsight, we also know that both leaders had a complex relationship to sexuality, at a personal level. This does not seem to have interfered with their ability to mobilize women to do campaign work.

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> excess of ninety miles per hour. Every time we suggested that she slow down, she shouted,
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> "I don't need you to tell me how to drive. You men make me sick"
>
> Shortly after, we crossed into Mississippi . . . with Dorothy still doing ninety and fussing at our chauvinism.[26]

In part because the SCLC organized through churches, women were inevitably part of the marching and the singing, the challenges on the courthouse steps, at the lunch counter, and in schools and colleges.

The armies of the world, by tradition, refuse the active participation of women on the front lines. The non-violent, direct action movements depended on women as much as, or more than on men.[27]

Military Strategies and Tactics

Examples abound of strategic and tactical maneuvers in India and the United States that were directly comparable to maneuvers in war. I single out four: marching, mounting targeted campaigns, carefully selecting territorial objectives and the dual track of negotiating while engaged in direct action. This section closes with a discussion of imprisonment, comparing POWs to movement prisoners, which I see as a natural transition into final part of the paper: the discussion of fearlessness, the human capacity for suffering and courage, and the spiritual rhetoric of non-violence.

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[26] Young, *A Way Out of Now Way,* p.56

[27] In King J., Martin Luther, *Why We Can't Wait,* London, Penguin, 1964, MLK writes: There is a powerful motivation when a suppressed people enlist in an army that marches under the banner of nonviolence. A nonviolent army has a magnificent universal quality. To join an army that trains its adherents in the methods of violence, you must be of a certain age. But in Birmingham, some of the most valued foot soldiers were youngsters ranging from elementary pupils to teenage high school and college students. For acceptance in the armies that maim and kill, one must be physically sound, possessed of straight limbs and accurate vision. But in Birmingham, the lame and the halt and the crippled could and did join up. Al Hibbler, the sightless singer, would never have been accepted in the United States Army or the army of any other nation, but he held a commanding position in our ranks.

In armies of violence, there is a caste of rank. In Birmingham, outside of the few generals and lieutenants who necessarily directed and coordinated operations, the regiments of the demonstrators marched in democratic phalanx. Doctors marched with window cleaners. Lawyers demonstrated with laundresses. Ph.D.'s and noD's were treated with perfect equality by the registrars of the nonviolence movement." pp. 38-39.

Such "open participation," "join us if you are moved to" attitudes resemble a church more than any other public institution, arm, college, business, or even government hearing.

Gandhi was equally committed to open access, and caused a scandal in India by including untouchables in his ashram.

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Marching

When the history of a war is told, it is usually as a sequence of battles. If a soldier describes his experience of the same events, it is likely to be a story of endless marches and maneuvers, interrupted briefly by a few truly terrifying moments. William McNeill's *Keeping Together in Time,*[28] a discussion of the social functions of rhythmic movement in groups, opens with stories of his own physical experience with drill as a recruit in World War II, hours of marching that he calls "muscular bonding." He links drill with the bonding experienced in a community ritual, in a political ceremony and in dance.[29] He suggests that a significant portion of the power in a military unit derives from marching which creates a sense of solidarity, demonstrates that collective energies have been mobilized, actually transports power from one place to another, and makes visible among the marchers their collective willingness to take risks and their interdependence.

> When an entire army had been trained in this fashion, far more effective control of the course of battle became possible. Relatively precise coordination between different units and adjustment to unexpected circumstances became quicker and more predictable. Such an army, in effect, had the advantages of a central nervous system. Everything went faster. Obedience was more nearly automatic. The commander's intention and performance converged.[30]

McNeill's book ends with a discouraging section on Hitler's ability to transform muscular bonding into an instrument of fascism. He would have found more encouragement had he looked at the Salt march of 1930, or the great civil rights marches of the 1960s. Recently, in Northern Ireland, we have seen a civil war constructed as much around an annual series of sectarian confrontational marches as around bombs and violence. As I give this paper, fears are mounting again that the Irish marching season now underway has the power to reignite the violence.

The non-violent campaigners were once equally dependent on synchronized movement, and its essential corollary, quick, obedient responsiveness. In recent years, activists have lost this kind of power, because these days, people converging for major demonstrations on Washington DC, arrive by plane, bus, car and train, and make their way privately to the Mall. After the speeches, they disperse again, privately, to watch themselves on TV in a bar or hotel room. The men converging for the million man march in 1997, hearked back to the earlier tradition. They came overland and together. Their arrival caused a stir

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[28] McNeill, William, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995.

[29] I am attracted to this book, as I am to Jane Jacobs work, partly because of their fearless willingness to see the big picture reflected in smaller conceptual spaces.

[30] McNeill, *Keeping Together*, p.130.

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in part because of the deeper racism in the US which fears the black male power, but in part also, because they too had mobilized, had generated the power of collective motion.

In the 1960s, the journey itself was the destination.[31] The journey might be a long one, and it never had the precision of a Prussian drill, but it was a rhythmic and bonding experience still, with singing at its core.

> There were no soloists; there were song leaders. . . The minute you start the song, the song is created by everybody there. There is really almost a musical explosion. The mass meetings always started with these freedom songs. Most of the meeting was singing. Songs were the bed of everything and I never felt songs do that [before]. . . . . We varied the verses [of This Little Light of Mine]: "All in the street, I'm going to let it shine. All in the jailhouse, I'm going to let it shine." . . . . They could not stop our sound. They would have had to kill us to stop us from singing."[32]

Though marchers for independence and for civil rights were in civilian clothes, their confrontational approach and courageous will was never in doubt.

Targeted Campaigns

The Indian quest for independence, and the United States quest to end segregation mounted specific campaigns, one after another . Gandhi's first campaigns of what he called "non-cooperation" were in solidarity with indigo and textile workers. He sought better land leases for the indigo workers, and won, and better wages for textile workers and won. In 1919 he decided to protest the British attempt to extend wartime restrictions on civic freedoms. This campaign, a national endeavor, had to be suspended because the official violence in response was so intense. The 1930s saw Gandhi's internationally famous work, on the salt tax. The United States experienced a similar progression of distinct campaigns: school desegregation (mid 1950s), broader desegregation (early 1960s), and voting rights (mid-late 1960s). Local people might make requests for support. It was the leaders who set and publicized the specific action plans. There was generalship at work here.

> You knew a meeting was coming to an end when [King] stood and summed up all the preceding hours. He could remember all the various speakers and the several different points each had made . . . Finally, he would declare, quietly, which proposal he favored and begin to lay out the next move. King was not only a great orator but one hell of a field general. I came to the conclusion that no one else

[31] This seems like a spiritual act.

[32] Bernice Johnson Reagon, quoted in *Eyes on the Prize*, p.177

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> could have unified the collection of ministers, gangsters, self-seekers, students, prima donnas and devoted, high-minded people we had in Selma that winter.[33]

The leaders also set the territorial objectives.

Land

In the midst of an era of technological warfare, it is easy to ignore that war is a territorial activity. People fight in order to capture land. They demonstrate their successes by becoming able to move freely in enemy terrain, and by preventing the free movement of others. Indian and American campaigners also challenged for territorial control.

One of Gandhi's favorite territorial techniques was simply to arrive at a place and then refuse to leave. His first action in support of the Indigo growers of Champaran, set the pattern for this particular way of asserting of control over land. Freedom riders in 1961 tried to send desegregated buses on highways in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. The demonstrators in Selma kept trying literally to climb the courthouse steps to register to vote. Charlayne Hunter Gault and Henry Hampton set out to walk freely on the campus of the University of Georgia, like James Meredith at Ole Miss, the University of Mississippi. Black American became echoes of Gandhi and his followers everywhere walking to the sea to get their own salt.

Central to all these territorial strategies was publicity. Whenever the British Imperial troops, or the Alabama Sheriffs chose to use force, they were able quickly to disperse people, to re-establish physical control over the city, the courthouse, the farm or the college. But the official violence directed at hatless humble men, at women and children, met with revulsion among watchers in the wider world. It turned out that armed men could be held in check by public disdain. The massacre of civilians Amritsar had made the British dreadfully ashamed, and led, in fact to a government inquiry.

> Like his predecessors [in India], the Negro was willing to risk martyrdom in order to move and stir the social conscience of his community and the nation. Instead of submitting to surreptitious cruelty in thousands of dark jail cells and on countless shadowed street corners, he would force his oppressor to commit his brutality openly -- in the light of day -- with the rest of the world looking on.[34]

Webb Miller, an American journalist, suggests that Gandhi made similar calculations as he designed his the strategies which turned his followers into the victims of military

33 *Black in Selma*, p.192

34 *Why We Cannot Wait,* p. 37.

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beatings during the salt campaign.[35] The sight of Sheriff Clark berating C.T. Vivian on the Courthouse steps in Selma directly undermined the white community. As the Mayor of Selma put it:

> They picked Selma just like a movie producer would pick a set. You had the right ingredients. Clark, in his day, had a helmet liner like General Patton, an Eisenhower jacket and a swagger stick. . . . .
> I did not understand how big it was ([Bloody Sunday] until I saw it on television. . . .
> We became the march capital of the world. Kids would come in, students, to get their spurs in Selma.[36]

Indians and African Americans alike knew they were conducting their territorial campaign on the world's stage, resembling the propagandists that accompany an army in war-time.

Every military leader who has ever taken or lost territory has done so with an eye to the impact this will have on public support for the cause. However, "taking" territory, in the Jacobs sense, is never the only strategy that determines the outcome of a war. For combat to end and a new disposition of powers and resources to be established, the two parties must ultimately become able, once again, to trade and negotiate.

Negotiations

Negotiations in are not restricted to being "end game" event. It seems paradoxical that combatants should be negotiating as they fight, and yet this is the norm, not the exception. Indians negotiated with the British throughout the conflict. They held important talks in London in 1931, which Gandhi himself attended. In later years, he was often in fact brought into negotiations with the government while officially a British prisoner.[37]

Martin Luther King, in jail in Birmingham, provided an explanation of the connections between direct action and negotiations:

> My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

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[35] "Gandhi," the movie, directed by Richard Attenborough.

[36] *Eyes on the Prize,* p272.

[37] In this he foreshadowed Nelson Mandela's role in ending apartheid.

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> While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas . . . but since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.
>
> . . . You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sitins, marches, and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiations. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolentresister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and halftruths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.
>
> The purpose of our directaction program is to create a situation so crisispacked that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

The hostilities in the southern United States were so intense, that direct negotiations between the civil rights campaigners on local and state governments primarily fed, rather than eased the confrontation. The Federal government had always been a part of the conflict, and in the mid 1960s, more and more often the talks aimed at settlements between Federal officials and the black community, which state and local governments[38] would be forced, under the constitutional primacy of Federal law, to acquiesce to.

As in war, so in non-violent confrontation; the talks to resolve the dispute were conducted in the midst of the dispute.

Prisoners

Indians in the 1920s and '30s, were imprisoned by the thousands and thousands. The repeated jailing of Gandhi was the most visible. In the United States in the 1950s and

38 This situation resembles that which faced Bosnian Serbs in the Dayton Peace accords of 1995. Serbia's President, Milosevic, took over talks, and subjected his allies to a treaty they had every reason to dislike.

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'60s the numbers were much smaller, but arrests still numbered in the thousands, and many were arrested again and again.

Gandhi was in gaol (as he spelled it) for years at a time, and in later years treated with considerable respect. African Americans, even King, generally suffered more than Gandhi; other Indians no doubt did too. They were liable to be beaten on arrest, and manhandled once behind bars. If there was any defense against mistreatment, it was presence of all those others arrested at the same demonstrations, and in the publicity increasingly given to events after the arrests.

These prisoners never saw themselves as convicts. Suffering through jail time was yet another campaign, arrest a way of demonstrating that one had broken through enemy lines. Such "jailbirds" were comparable to prisoners of war. No shame attached to being arrested, indeed it was a sign of courage, and a willingness to engage fully in the struggle.

These "prisoners of war" had none of the special war services of the Red Cross since by law, they were in violation of statute, but their sentencing and release followed much more arbitrary patterns than would have been the case if the arrests were based on "crime." Indeed prisoners were released in exchange for agreements to keep the peace, just the way war-time armies arrange the release of prisoners as a matter of exchange.

At times Gandhi would add to the stress of prison by subjecting himself, also, to a fast to the death. Imprisonment was both a campaign tactic and also a test of the deepest demands of the struggle: in both nations the movement's leaders and followers were never in any doubt that like soldiers in wartime, their success depended ultimately on being fearless, and on a willingness to suffer anything, even death.

Fearlessness Instead of Vengeance

Armies which lose their fearlessness surrender, even when their weapons will last for decades; other armies will refuse to surrender, even when their only remaining resources are courage and a seemingly endless endurance for suffering. As Gandhi put it, fearlessness is the greatest of the virtues, and in the midst of suffering it subjugates hatred and the urge for vengeance:

> Every reader of the Gita knows that fearlessness heads the list of the Divine Attributes . . . In my opinion . . . fearlessness richly deserves the first rank assigned to it. How can one seek Truth or cherish Love without fearlessness? As Pritam says, 'the path of the Hari (the Lord) is the path of the brave, nor cowards.' Hari here means Truth, and the brave are those armed with fearlessness, not with the sword, the rifle and the like. Those are taken up only by those who are possessed by fear.

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> Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear, -- fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession But the internal foes we must always fear. We are rightly afraid of animal passion, anger and the like . . .[39]

Since fearlessness is so central to the repudiation of vengeance, I lay out its characteristics in the words of practitioners of Nonviolence. In the interests of narrative coherence, all of these were participants in the movement to end segregation in the United States.

Andrew Young and friends, on that car journey with Dorothy Cotton, lived and learned together, how to grow beyond the fear of death:

> My companions and I had all been very much afraid of what might await us at a Mississippi jail in the wake of the Evers assassination, and our earlier emotional clash really had been an attempt to fight our own fears. But in the aftermath of a senseless near accident that might have killed us all, we finally relaxed and began talking about our fears.
>
> All of a sudden Medgar Evers' martyrdom in the cause of freedom seemed like an honor. Death is inevitable. We are fortunate if we are able to contribute to the values and ideals of our lives even in the act of dying. Martyrdom has always been one of the powerful mysteries of life. To die in a cause for which you truly believe is a blessing, for you contribute to that cause far beyond the physical act of death.
>
> Martin King often quoted Reinhold Niebuhr who had said, "It is better to die for a cause that will ultimately succeed, than to live for one that will ultimately fail."
>
> We were all so thankful to have escaped a meaningless death in a traffic accident that we began to think anything that happened to us at the Winona jail would be a blessing. The next hour of driving, now within the speed limit, was one of the most inspiring of my life. We talked openly of death without fear and began to discuss the power of the cross. We began to see that God had changed the world through the shedding of innocent blood.[40]

Martin Luther King, in 1964, writing about the fact that some died, and others faced dreadful forms of police brutality, found himself saying:

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[39] Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, trans. Valji Govindji Desai, Ahmedbad, Navajivan Publishing, pp. 27-29.

[40] *A Way Out of No Way,* p.57.

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> It is true that some demonstrators suffered violence, and that a few paid the extreme penalty of death. They were the martyrs of last summer who laid down their lives to put an end to the brutalizing of thousands who had been beaten and bruised and killed in dark streets and back rooms of sheriffs' offices, day in and day out, in hundreds of summers past.
>
> The striking thing about the nonviolent crusade of 1963 was that so few felt the sting of bullets, or the clubbing of billies and nightsticks. Looking back, it becomes obvious that the oppressors were restrained not only because the world was looking but also because, standing before them, were hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Negroes who for the first time dared to look back at a white man, eye to eye.[41]

Andrew Young had an actual encounter with a violent crowd, during a march in St. Augustine:

> After I prayed, one of the "good ol' sisters" sang out in a loud, clear voice: "Be not dismayed, whate'er betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you."
>
> Then everyone joined in on the chorus: "God will take care of you, through every day . . . all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you." We sang out an affirmation of faith that was about to be tested. I finally realized that there was no turning back for any logical or pragmatic reason. So I was trapped, but I was still determined that we could finish this march without anyone being hurt.
>
> We marched, still singing softly, "God will take care of you." And I thought to myself, "It's one thing to sing this in church where it's easy to believe it, but the song says through every day, and this is nighttime in St. Augustine." The mob was still a block away, but they, too, became strangely quiet when they realized that we were marching toward them. The silence was broken by the rattle of chains and the shattering of a bottle. It was easy to anticipate what they had in mind. Mobs could do almost anything under the cover of night, especially when they really had the support of the local law enforcement.
>
> I began to understand what it meant to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . . [and] fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4). I was not afraid for some reason, perhaps because I was determined that none of those good people get hurt.

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41 *Why We Can't Wait*, p. 39.

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I remember being very disturbed when one of the ministers walking with me heard the shattering of glass and murmured an expletive. I simply said, "Don't cuss— pray."

Soon, we approached a road blocked by a group of burly white men. I stopped the march and decided that I must try to talk with them. There was no turning back, so I walked over to the gang. I later learned the gang was led by "Hoss" Manucy, an underprivileged white man who really thought that his security and survival depended on keeping blacks down. Hoss was seen on national television bragging, "I'm a good Christian. I don't smoke; I don't drink; I just beat riggers."

The sheriff was nowhere to be found. I don't think I even got a word out. I was standing there facetoface with the one man who seemed like the leader, and then someone blindsided me. I didn't feel a thing, but I remember being hit in the jaw with someone's best punch and almost simultaneously being clubbed with what must have been a blackjack. From then on, it was lights out. Only several years later did I see a film clip of the beating I took. I was stomped and kicked and probably only spared serious injury because I instinctively rolled into a ball and protected my head and stomach from direct blows.

When I came to my senses, I was being helped to my feet by Willie Bolden of the SCLC staff, who had come to my rescue. I didn't feel any physical pain or fear. I was only determined that we keep on marching. All of our thinking and training had taught us that if you let violence deter you, you're only empowering and encouraging violence. At this point, even though I was probably not aware of what I was doing or what had happened to me, I knew that we could not let this violence stop our march. If it did, it would soon crush our movement.

Martin was fond of preaching, "We will match your ability to inflict suffering with our ability to endure suffering in the confidence that unearned suffering is redemptive."

The mob had left me on the ground and moved back into the park, certain that I had learned my lesson. As I came back to the front of the line I said, "We can't stop now, let's go." And slowly but surely the straggling band of nonviolent marchers continued. I then remember someone in the mob cussing and saying, "Them niggers got some nerve."

I don't know what motivated us to march on, but it certainly wasn't cheekiness. It was closer to faith and determined belief that "the Lord will make a way out of no way." But the way was not to open yet. The same gang moved to the entry of the park closest to the Old Slave Market and once again blocked our way. Again I kept marching slowly and surely until they stood a few feet in front of us.

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> This time, I did get to utter a couple of sentences. "We are not here to do you any harm," I said simply. "We merely want to have a word of prayer at this place where our ancestors were bought and sold as slaves, to ask God to help us end slavery in all its forms."
>
> Just as I finished my sentence, a young boy burst through the crowd and attempted to kick me in my testicles. Fortunately this time I saw him coming and shifted just a bit to the side. As I bent over to avoid the kick, the blackjack again came across my head. This time it merely hurt and left a knot. I did not go down and, thank God, I did not go out. (For months later, I kept wishing I could meet one of these guys alone and away from St. Augustine and the discipline of the movement. I was still struggling with a total commitment to nonviolence, but I had no question that it was the only tactic that had a chance for success in the South.)
>
> Then, as if by magic, Sheriff Davis appeared and waved the crowd away with one sweep of his hand and said, "Let 'em through." And we walked on to the Old Slave Market, knelt in prayer, and then returned to the church without incident.
>
> After it was over, I felt a real sense of triumph. No one was seriously hurt. My bruises lasted for months but a new sense of personal confidence also became a part of my life. This had been a real test, and I hadn't faltered.[42]

Fannie Lou Hamer felt the same during her attempt to register to vote:

> When they asked for those to raise their hands who'd go down to the courthouse the next day, I raised mine. Had it high up as I could get it. I guess if I'd had any sense I'd a-been a little scared, but what was the point of being scared. The only thing their could do to me was kill me and it seemed liked they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember. . . .
> Mr. Marlowe, the plantation owner, was mad and raising sand. He'd heard I'd tried to register. That night he called on us and said, "We're not going to have this in Mississippi . . . " So I left that same night. Pap had to stay on till work on the plantation was through. Ten days later they fired into Mrs. Tucker's house where I was staying. They also shot two girls at Mr. Sissel's.[43]

Andrew Young gave a speech to a crowd to prepare them for the challenges in a non-violent march:

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42 *A Way Out of No Way*, p. 93-95

43 *Eyes on The Prize*. p.246.

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"How many people here have ever been chased by a dog before? Raise your hands." Almost every hand was raised.

"How many of you have been hit in the head playing baseball?" Again most hands were raised.

"And how many have ever enjoyed a shower on a hot day?" By this time people began to anticipate my drift. A soft murmur went across the church as I continued.

"When a dog bites you, you get a shot and it heals in a matter of days. If you're hit in the head with a bat, you might get knocked out, but usually, even the knot is gone in a couple of weeks. In a shower on a hot day, like today, your clothes are probably already wet and will dry in a few minutes.

"The issue here is not the dog, the billy clubs, and the fire hoses. We are upset all right, but we are upset about those scars that racism and segregation have put on our psyches and our souls. Those do not heal easily, and they continue to cripple us throughout our lives, just as they have crippled our parents and grandparents.

"The feeling that, 'White is right, if you're yellow you're mellow, if you're brown, stick around, and if you're black, get back' hurts us. This is the sense of inferiority that drives men to drink, that leads girls to get pregnant rather than finish school, that gnaws away at our self-confidence until we begin to believe that we can't do anything right on our own.

"We are marching against an entire system that must be changed. It would do no good to kill the policeman who beats you; he's trapped by the same system. He believes that his white skin makes him superior, and that he's supposed to keep you down. Somehow we've got to help even the racist policeman to see that a man can't keep another man down in the gutter unless he keeps one foot down there with him.

"It's time for us to get the entire South out of the ditch. Black and white men and women must rise up together against those things that make us fear and hate each other.

This movement is a movement as Frederick Douglass said, '. . . to save black men's bodies and white men's souls.'"

As the crowd began to "Amen!" and answer back with "Tell the truth!" and "Say it, preacher!" I found myself forgetting my selfconsciousness and simply pouring out the feelings in my heart. I don't know how long I talked or what else I said, but the experience of the power of the pulpit, of God actually seeming to put words in my mouth, was a religious experience that moved me to a new level of

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> leadership. This moment was lifechanging just as Martin's decision to go to jail and trust in God to "make a way out of no way" raised him to an even higher plane of responsibility.

King, and Gandhi, and their followers knew that the non-violence of their strategies was no protection against danger, even death. The strength of the "battlers," as Andy Young once called them, depended on fearless courage and resilience in the midst of suffering just as much does a soldier's survival and success in war. The demands of non-violence action are, in this characteristic, indistinguishable from the willingness to go to war, and yet again and again, they returned to self-suffering rather than vengeance as the route to justice.

Divine Inspiration

Talking about fearlessness, most speakers made references to religion, to God, to the Divine, to faith and belief. The time has come to turn to the part that religion plays in all of this, another of the fundamental differences are to be found between warriors who use weapons of violence and those who use the weapons of the spirit.

The causes that unified activists and ordinary men and women in India and in the US were clear. The time was "right," and yet the rightness of the time, I would argue, depended also on the particular qualities Gandhi and King brought to their lives and their leadership. Direct action using nonviolence presents repeated challenges, and to learn the practice, one needs a Teacher, a Teacher willing to suffer him/herself, a Teacher whose love and lack of hatred comes straight out of his/her spiritual convictions. After Gandhi's death, his son described the essential core of his father's success:

> As I've sat and listened to you, more and more it has dawned upon me that you are working on the assumption that if you can only intellectually understand my father's methods, what he hoped to do with it and how he worked it—you'll be able to work it too. . . . That's what I thought when I followed him in South Africa. I have been doing this for twenty years what you're doing now. But I think I understand every method he used, but they won't work for me— where he succeeded, I am a relative failure . . . l have come to this conclusion about it and I commend it to you for your thoughtful consideration; that these methods and these tactics that you're talking about were the methods and tactics of a man of all but unparalleled purity of heart. It's not my lack of intellectual understanding that has made me a failure. It is my lack of purity of heart.[44]

How does this purity of heart relate to the warrior spirit and strategies I have described? Purity provides the reason to mobilize fearless energy for change while shutting down, or

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44 Manilal Gandhi Nov. 1949 to Mordecai Johnson. quoted in *Raising Up a Prophet* pp. 145146.

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at least discrediting the quest for vengeance and reactions based in hatred. The love of justice preached by King, and Ahimsa, (the love that will not harm) at the core of Gandhi's work, were their fearless energies. Neither man had any doubts that the opposition was intransigent, and must change, but neither constructed the campaign around the "us" and "them" mentalities that are so central to mobilizing in war.

If Gandhi and King were "generals" and also "Teachers," how do these roles intersect? If one looks at them as Teachers, then their classes were all conducted in the field, and the enrollment unlimited. Even an ordinary teacher knows that this would present logistical and administrative problems of a military scale. Their generalship, though consisted of more than logistics: it consisted of a powerful strategic and tactical sense, and a willingness, again and again, to take all who were would follow into intensely dangerous places. Perhaps the conundrum can be resolved by seeing the Courthouse steps, the Indigo fields, the Selma Bridge, the Salt Works, and the prison cell as space for public confrontation, and also as sacred space. After all, the marchers set out from Church and Ashram; they returned again, at the end of the day. The Teacher was always engaged in sacred practice, while the General led the forces.

Gandhi and King were Teachers in the spiritual sense. Their followers depended on their embodiment of the imperative for fearless courage and purity of heart in individual men. Today's equivalents, Nelson Mandela and Thich Nhat Hanh have served a similar role. While each also participated as members of groups -- King and the SCLC, Mandela and the ANC, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Order of Interbeing, but spiritual momentum emanated from the leaders. The group is hospitable to newcomers, but it is the leader who teaches them.

Each man spoke to his followers again and again of the spiritual nature of their quest, a quest which others chose to work on as political or military projects.

"We will match your ability to inflict suffering with[45] our ability to endure suffering in the confidence that unearned suffering is redemptive."

Conclusion

The training, and spiritual demands made on the participants in India and in the US were intense, and like soldiers, the recruits signed declarations of loyalty to the cause. However the every-day warriors, the thousands who marched, also differed in a key way from soldiers at war. The activists were ordinary people who could each do what came naturally: to march and sing, to board a bus, to sit down for a meal, gather salt and pray, feed a child, bandage a bruise. In doing these natural acts by the hundreds of thousands, they were able to demonstrate their own implacable will. Many of the campaigners ended

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[45] MLK, quoted by Young in *A Way Out of No Way,* p.94

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up like those who have been soldiers in a "good war:" they looked back on the years of ordinary, every day action as among the most meaningful of their entire lives.

The injunction to be non-violent is, at its core, the injunction never to respond to assault and injury with hatred and revenge, but simply to move on, move forward, or to retreat, regroup and move on again another day. The leadership which fostered such profound fearlessness had the attributes both of general and spiritual teacher.

The campaigns for Independence for India, 1900-1948, and for Civil Rights for African Americans, 1955-1968 provided overpowering momentum for change (against overwhelming odds) and, having waged a campaign for change that was free of vengeance, they created a transformation that even their earlier enemies knew could never be reversed.

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