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30 Examples of Successful Non Violent Action

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An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind. --Mahatma Gandhi

In Michael Nagler's latest book, he explains how to use the practice of nonviolence for the sake of progress and challenging injustice. It is literally a weapon of spirit. Many have dismissed nonviolence, however, and think that it may have worked in India during the independence movement, but otherwise has no proven track record. They would be wrong.

Nonviolence has been used as a tool for change since before the time of Christ all the way up to just a year ago, and here are just thirty global and historical examples of nonviolent action achieving real results:

494 B.C. -- The plebeians of Rome withdrew from the city and refused to work for days in order to correct grievances they had against the Roman consuls.

1765-1775 A.D. -- The American colonists mounted three major nonviolent resistance campaigns against British rule (against the Stamp Acts of 1765, the Townsend Acts of 1767, and the Coercive Acts of 1774) resulting in de facto independence for nine colonies by 1775.

1850-1867 -- Hungarian nationalists, led by Francis Deak, engaged in nonviolent resistance to Austrian rule, eventually regaining self-governance for Hungary as part of an Austro-Hungarian federation.

1905-1906 -- In Russia, peasants, workers, students, and the intelligentsia engaged in major strikes and other forms of nonviolent action, forcing the Czar to accept the creation of an elected legislature.

1917 -- The February 1917 Russian Revolution, despite some limited violence, was also predominantly nonviolent and led to the collapse of the czarist system.

1913-1919 -- Nonviolent demonstrations for woman's suffrage in the United States led to the passage and ratification of the Constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote.

1920 -- An attempted coup d'etat, led by Wolfgang Kapp against the Weimar Republic of Germany failed when the population went on a general strike, refusing to give its consent and cooperation to the new government.

1923 -- Despite severe repression, Germans resisted the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, making the occupation so costly politically and economically that the French and Belgian forces finally withdrew.

1920s-1947 -- The Indian independence movement led by Mohandas Gandhi is one of the best known examples of nonviolent struggle.

1933-45 -- Throughout World War II, there were a series of small and usually isolated groups that used nonviolent techniques against the Nazis successfully. These groups include the White Rose and the Rosenstrasse Resistance.

1940-43 -- During World War II, after the invasion of the Wehrmacht, the Danish government adopted a policy of official cooperation (and unofficial obstruction) which they called "negotiation under protest." Embraced by many Danes, the unofficial resistance included slow production, emphatic celebration of Danish culture and history, and bureaucratic quagmires.

1940-45 -- During World War II, Norwegian civil disobedience included preventing the Nazification of Norway's educational system, distributing of illegal newspapers, and maintaining social distance (an "ice front") from the German soldiers.

1940-45 -- Nonviolent action to save Jews from the Holocaust in Berlin, Bulgaria, Denmark, Le Chambon, France and elsewhere.

1944 -- Two Central American dictators, Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez (El Salvador) and Jorge Ubico (Guatemala), were ousted as a result of nonviolent civilian insurrections.

1953 -- A wave of strikes in Soviet prison labor camps led to improvements in living conditions of political prisoners.

1955-1968 -- Using a variety of nonviolent methods, including bus boycotts, economic boycotts, massive demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides, the U.S. civil rights movement won passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

1968-69 -- Nonviolent resistance to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia enabled the Dubcek regime to stay in power for eight months, far longer than would have been possible with military resistance.

1970s and 80s -- The anti-nuclear power movements in the US had campaigns against the start-up of various nuclear power plants across the US, including Diablo Canyon in Central California.

1986-94 -- US activists resist the forced relocation of over 10,000 traditional Navajo people living in Northeastern Arizona, using the Genocide Demands, where they called for the prosecution of all those responsible for the relocation for the crime of genocide.

1986 -- The Philippines "people power" movement brought down the oppressive Marcos dictatorship.

1989 -- The nonviolent struggles to end the Communist dictatorships in Czechoslovakia in 1989 and in East Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1991.

1989 -- The Solidarity struggle in Poland, which began in 1980 with strikes to support the demand of a legal free trade union, and concluded in 1989 with the end of the Polish Communist regime.

1989 -- Nonviolent struggles led to the end of the Communist dictatorships in Czechoslovakia in 1989 and in East Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1991.

1990 -- The nonviolent protests and mass resistance against the Apartheid policies in South Africa, including a massive international divestment movement, especially between 1950 and 1990, brings Apartheid down in 1990. Nelson Mandela, African National Congress leader, is elected President of South Africa in 1994 after spending 27 years in prison for sedition.

1991 -- The noncooperation and defiance defeated the Soviet "hard-line" coup d'état in Moscow.

1996 -- The movement to oust Serbia dictator Slobodan Milosevic, which began in November 1996 with Serbs conducting daily parades and protests in Belgrade and other cities. At that time, however, Serb democrats lacked a strategy to press on the struggle and failed to launch a campaign to bring down the Milosevic dictatorship. In early October 2000, the Otpor (Resistance) movement and other democrats rose up again against Milosevic in a carefully planned nonviolent struggle.

1999 to Present -- Popular protests of corporate power & globalization begin with Seattle WTO protest in Seattle, 1999. This is what set the trend for the Occupy movement which is still alive.

2001 -- The "People Power Two" campaign, ousts Filipino President Estrada in early 2001.

2004-05 -- The Ukrainian people take back their democracy with the Orange revolution.

2010 to Present -- Arab Spring nonviolent uprisings result in the ouster of dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt and ongoing struggles in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries.

This article originally appeared in BK Community, a community dedicated to creating a world that works for all.