
SATYA - TRUTHFUL IN THOUGHT, SPEECH & ACTION

Every day nonviolence invites us to move
From mechanistic to organic
From dualistic to holistic
From event to process
From react to reframe
From extremes to complexity
From fragmented to integrated
From unhealthy to sustainable
From violence to wholeness.”

Pace e Bene



Now we can no longer just give answers and explanations, we have to become the answer, and our own transformation is the only credible explanation. It seems we must tame and integrate the demon of violence within ourselves before we have anything to say to anybody else.

Richard Rohr

Is the Protest March Obsolete?

By: Ruth Ann Angus

The question came up in a Zoom session. The person was in a quandary. She said this, “It has to do with having heartfelt protests that we feel called to, yet also experiencing that our protests can actually provoke others to raise up against us even further escalating the divide between people. I have seen this time and time again,” she said, “and have gotten to the point where I don't want to protest anymore because it brings out the racism, for example, that we are protesting. These days people are getting downright violent on planes, and even

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more hatred is shown. Is there a way to protest that does not cause others to just get louder and more fervent? It seems like our divides are just getting wider and wider and now we even have fire departments that are protesting that they are being mandated to get vaccines. Is the world just going crazy or what?"

The world has been going crazy for a long time. The question is whether protest marches achieve their goal. Is protest itself obsolete? Good nonviolent actions have brought about almost all the positive changes of the previous century. Dr. King's civil rights marches had a goal to allow African Americans of the deep south the right to vote. After much anguish, too much bloodshed and loss of life, the protest marches were successful, and The Civil Rights Act was placed into law.

Granted that even with a law such as the Civil Rights Act in place, racism is still rampant. Apparently, legality cannot affect a change in the way people think. Even some peace advocates who are trying to effect change often harbor hate and anger in their hearts instead of compassion and understanding. We need a different approach to our protest marches.

Protest marches and demonstrations have been taking place for a very long time. In a book entitled "Why Civil Resistance Works," Erica Chenoweth, Ph.D., and Maria J. Stephan detail the statistics that support protest and nonviolent resistance. "Though it defies consensus, between 1900 and 2006, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were more than twice as effective as their violent counterparts," they wrote. They found that nonviolent resistance presents fewer obstacles to moral and physical involvement and presents better levels of participation that contribute to an "enhanced resilience, a greater probability of tactical innovation, increased opportunity for civic disruption and therefore less incentive for the regime to maintain the status quo."

Gandhi's Salt March to the Sea in 1930 is another instance showing how protest and civil resistance were instrumental in India achieving freedom from British domination.

The marches protesting the Vietnam War during the 1960s contributed to the final ending of that disastrous conflict. The major intent of people participating in those marches was for the end to that specific war not necessarily for the end to all wars and one questions whether an understanding of nonviolence was up-
permost in the intent.

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All of this still begs the question as to whether protest marches are working now. Are people so jaded that they are beyond responding to these causes? Does government truly take notice? Or does only violence get our attention?

Recent demonstrations and marches in San Luis Obispo, California ran into trouble. No city permits were issued for a march; traffic on a freeway was interrupted and placed in a dangerous situation; violence erupted on that freeway; emergency vehicles were detained from reaching area hospitals; police retaliation occurred with the order to use tear gas on a demonstration crowd, and leaders and members of the march were arrested and are now proceeding through the court system on a variety of charges. All these things could have been avoided had march operators been trained in nonviolent demonstration methods.

Individuals looking to participate in marches and demonstrations would be wise to research the group or leaders of such actions before joining. Spontaneous marches and demonstrations are often thrown together at the last moment and may not occur as nonviolent actions.

One way that can work better for peacebuilders is to approach every issue with a positive rather than a negative attitude. Are we against racism? Yes! But rather than say what we are against, we say what we are for. We are for an inclusive and loving community that accepts all people no matter of race, color, ethnicity, or creed, without prejudice. In protest demonstrations and marches only carry signage of a positive nature and not full of negative “we are against” statements or any wording maligning an individual as often occurred during the Trump administration.

The work that hopefully will help change things, admittedly very slowly, is a more deliberate one on one dialogue with government representatives, police, and those in businesses and corporations who oversee change. This is the work that needs to be done more by people trained in nonviolence and conflict resolution. Protest marches are not obsolete and training in methods of nonviolence organizing will achieve much to assure that violence does not erupt with poorly thought-out protest campaigns.



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**An Example of a Peaceful Nonviolent
Demonstration
Cambria, California**

Teresa Lees, a member of Peacebuilders, Lead the Cambria Peace Group in a peaceful nonviolent demonstration commemorating the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol. The demonstration was covered on the evening news by NBC affiliate KSBY. Yes We Can Peacebuilders is proud of this successful non-violent demonstration in support of democracy. Way to Go Cambria Peace Group.



KSBY Reporter- Dusty Baker



Teresa Lees- Cambria Peace Group



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