In Focus: Nonviolence in Africa

Gandhi Museum, Durban, South Africa
EMERGENCE magazine is a monthly e-magazine by the Metta Center dedicated to sharing stories about nonviolence movements worldwide.

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OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote the transition to a nonviolent future by making the logic, history, and yet-unexplored potential of nonviolence more accessible to activists and agents of cultural change (which ultimately includes all of us). We focus on root causes (sometimes called “upstream” causes) to help people in any walk of life discover their innate capacity for nonviolence and use it more strategically for long-term transformation of themselves and the world. We work to challenge and replace the prevailing worldview with a much higher image of humanity informed by nonviolence and its implications for the meaning of life and value of the person.

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I was thrilled when Bijoyeta told me that this issue of Emergence would be dedicated to glimpses of nonviolence on the African continent.

In 2005-2007, I spent two years in Benin, West Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer. For those unfamiliar with the geography of this great, diverse continent, Benin is located between Nigeria and Togo, sharing a border on the north part of the country with Burkina Faso and Niger. Officially I worked as a volunteer English teacher in a village middle school, but I realized very quickly that my real work was learning from my Beninese friends. Here are six things that I learned:

1. Go outside and talk to your neighbors:

The first morning in the village where I would be living for the next two years, my neighbor, who would become my best friend, knocked on my door. I opened it, and she asked me if I wanted to come outside. I asked her if there was something happening, and she said there wasn’t anything in particular going on, just life in general. In other words, by keeping my door shut, and keeping to myself, I was alienating myself. Part of living in the village meant participating in daily life—lending a hand, sitting quietly with someone as we worked together, or just waiting for something to happen, as it eventually would.

2. Hold hands with your friends:

In Benin, holding hands is not a right reserved for heterosexual, romantic couples. In fact, public displays of male-female affection are discouraged. Same-sex friendships are on display, and men hold hands with their male friends, and women hold hands with their female friends. Even more, when you are a really good friend with someone, instead of trying to look different from them, you buy matching fabric and wear it out together.

3. Community requires forgiveness:

Often there would be small disputes between families and I was somewhat surprised to see my friends be in an argument one day and the next day—or a few days later—all seemed fine. A brother would be back at his sister’s restaurant where he was kicked out a day before, for example. When I would ask my friend about why, she told me seriously, “you just have to forgive people.” In order to make a community function, where people hold multiple roles and have numerous relationships, without forgiveness, the community would have no resilience. It was a question of being practical, not necessarily a moral choice.

4. If you have more, give more:

If you know that your friend needs something and you have more than you need, you can give it to them freely. You know that you are solidifying the community in the process and building a relationship. Moreover, if you have more than others and only spend it on yourself, you are seen as greedy, and out for your...
6. "Fat" is a compliment:

A common compliment in Benin is to tell someone that they are looking fat, because gaining weight means that you are at ease in life, that you have enough to eat, which means that people are taking care of you. As a 22-year-old coming from the United States where every standard of beauty reinforces losing weight and being thin, a culture of “fat shaming,” hearing that you are “getting fat” can be somewhat jarring. I only came to truly appreciate it when I returned home, a transformed woman who really felt comfortable with the body I had, fat or thin. I told a friend who looked like she lost weight, “you’ve lost weight,” and she said, “thank you,” and I was surprised. I meant that I was worried about her happiness!

The African continent is our mother, the birthplace of humanity, and we still have a lot to learn from her.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Emergence. While it can only scratch the surface of this great continent and this equally great power of non-violence, it shares some stories and perspectives that need to be heard as we look for--and learn from-- the best practices in our midst and build a nonviolent world together.

In heart unity,
Stephanie
The African Continent: Birthplace of Satyagraha, Nonviolence

“Africa is one of the biggest continents in the world.” Such is the modest beginning of Chapter One of Gandhi’s great work, Satyagraha in South Africa. I have always thought, though, that Gandhi was aware that he had launched the most significant experiment in social change the world had ever seen on an appropriately large stage. Satyagraha, launched on a date now associated with the opposite force, September 11, 1906, Tolstoy agreed, was the first time in history that Satyagraha was carried out on a large scale; and it would only get bigger when Gandhi carried it to India and the heart of colonialism, Martin Luther King picked up the baton in racist America, and on from there. In 1906 the word Satyagraha did not even exist (nor, in English, ‘nonviolence,’ for that matter): today it is a regular feature of the political landscape. One nonviolence scholar, who is not given to romantic exaggeration, has recently estimated that at any given time there is hardly a society today not experiencing some kind of nonviolent demonstration or movement.

Yet how much of a mark did Satyagraha, nonviolence, leave on the continent of its birth? This would be hard to say. As the articles in this issue will illustrate, Africa is home today to the extremes of appalling violence and a nonviolence based partly on its indigenous traditions—think of the concept of Ubuntu, “I am because you are,” popularized by Archbishop Tutu during the famed Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings that made possible South Africa’s remarkable transition from apartheid state to democracy. Some of the more remarkable experiments in what we call Restorative Justice are also African, most well known perhaps the Gacaca courts that similarly saved Rwanda from endless cycles of retributive violence. The most ‘restorative,’ and effective, practice I have heard of arose among the Babemba in South Africa (and other sub-saharan regions), where an offender sits in the middle of a circle...
with the entire village around him and every person in the village in turn says something positive about him. Africa is also a venue for a large number of conflict-resolving interventions, like the Quaker Great Lakes Initiative and the highly imaginative projects done by Search for Common Ground.

Not to mention that one of the most dramatic nonviolent uprisings of modern times unfolded in Liberia – scene of one of the most violent wars and despotic regimes. I had the pleasure of meeting Leemah Gbowee, who got a well-deserved Nobel Prize for her role in leading that mostly women’s rebellion, as I did Jenni Williams who is embroiled in similar struggles right now in Zimbabwe.

Whatever may be the explanation for this paradox, let us all hope that the power of women like Leemah Gbowee and Jenni Williams come increasingly to characterize the social texture of Africa and the world.
Recently, I heard a panelist speaking on South Sudan say that the current violence was not the “fault” of either President Salva Kiir or opposition leader Riek Machar, but was instead a result of the “fact” that neither had any experience of a “culture of peace,” which needed to be taught, presumably by outsiders. There are, of course, a number of problems with this statement, but the one I wish to focus on is the way it feeds into the trope of an entire continent filled with violence (as well as poverty and disease). This year, the Central African Republic and South Sudan take precedence in reinforcing the trope; last year it was the DRC and Mali; before it was Darfur in Sudan, Chad, Somalia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, and before that Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda.

Tropes are self-reinforcing, and are unfortunately exacerbated by pundits, journalists and academics who do not take the time to question or challenge them. Yet this trope leaves out the numerous articulations and experiences of nonviolence from the continent that provides models for those inside and also outside of it. This symposium featured three such articulations, but there are many, many more, which a brief overview like this one can only begin to plumb.

Nonviolent practices, campaigns, and theorizations in different parts of Africa have taken many forms, emerging from numerous dialectics and contradictions embedded in gendered, religious, customary and transnational histories and relationships. Without essentializing “culture” on the continent, one can still point to communal forms of conflict resolution and resistance to colonialism that have emerged in different ways through waves of precolonial, colonial and post-colonial power struggles.

Historical examples include the early debates in South Africa, where nonviolence was developed as a guiding philosophy and method in the struggle against British and Dutch colonization, not only by Gandhi, but also by black South Africans such as J.L. Dube and Albert Luthuli of the African National Congress. While the ANC and other resistance organizations moved away from nonviolence after 1953, it never disappeared from ethical debate, and nonviolent tools remained part of the range of techniques used to bring down the system of apartheid. Other examples come from the independence struggles of the 1950s and after. As Mary Elizabeth King states, “The real-life experience of African nonviolent struggles was important for Martin Luther King, Jr., who drew knowledge and encouragement from the civil resistance of Africans in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and elsewhere in their quests for independence from colonial rule” (King, December 18, 2012, in http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/teaching-and-learning-civil-resistance-in-west-africa/).

The example of Martin Luther King, Jr. is one that demonstrates the translatability (always within limits) of nonviolence philosophies and techniques across continents, not in an absolute sense but in both inspiring
practitioners and providing ideas about adapting resistance techniques to different situations. These twin aspects of nonviolence – thinking through its conceptual and often religious underpinnings and adapting techniques to situations “on-the-ground” – have been critical for at least three more recent, well-known campaigns: that of women in forcing negotiations in West African conflicts, that of Kenyan religious and NGO figures in stemming post-election violence in 2007, and that of young Egyptians in bringing an end to the Hosni Mubarak regime. In Liberia, the Women’s Peacebuilding Network, composed of Christian and Muslim women, worked together through war to compel the government and rebels to engage in peace talks, while not exempting outsiders from responsibility. In Kenya, groups working at numerous levels, from the grassroots to “eminent persons” in Africa, created a system of intersecting networks to address concerns about land and governance during the winter of 2008.

In Egypt, young professionals in the diaspora worked with in-country labor groups to study and adapt techniques used in Bosnia in the 1990s (another place where the use of nonviolence is unseen).

None of this is to claim that nonviolence is the only legitimate strategy or philosophy to use in situations of extreme violence and colonial or post-colonial oppression. The MauMau in Kenya (a derogatory term given to armed resisters by the British and eventually taken up by the resistance movement itself, as the play, “The Trial of Dedan Kimathi” by Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Micere Mugo demonstrates), the African National Congress in South Africa, anticolonial movements in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and

Protest in downtown Cairo toward Tahrir Square in November 2012 to commemorate the death of Gaber Salah, a revolutionary activist and member of the April 6th movement, who was killed in clashes between protestors and police. Image@Kelsey Norman.
Mozambique, and, for that matter, armed rebel movements in Central America, each demonstrates the need to look closely at a range of historical examples of resistance. It is unlikely that advocates of nonviolence alone will ever completely agree with proponents of movements such as these on the measures necessary to achieve liberation.

But it is well worth noting the range of religious, nationalist and gender-based philosophies and strategies of nonviolence developed in numerous contexts across Africa, because they demonstrate the problematic nature of the trope of a “naturally” violent continent. Nonviolence trainings and teachings take place through numerous institutes, sponsored by religious and secular entities, including the (Jesuit) Hekima Institute and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (both in Nairobi), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (Cape Town), Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (across Rwanda), the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP, Accra), among others. Women of faith organized the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989 to “be agents of justice” (www.thecirclecawt.org); faith leaders have organized under national sections of World Religions for Peace in numerous African countries, and Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) focuses specifically on issues that connect peace across Africa’s major faith traditions (including African religions). Rwanda has become well known for its locally based “transitional justice” work, and Sierra Leone’s Fambul Tok and its TRC are also based on alternative visions of restoring communities destroyed by violence. These initiatives can be read as emanating from cultures of nonviolence, unlike criminal justice systems, which prescribe punitive forms of violence.

The primary problem with tropes that reinforce the idea of Africa as inherently violent is that they ignore the structural issues and historical relationships that have created conditions that make conflict difficult to avoid. As of this writing, the continent continues to be militarized with and through the U.S. in ways that appear to be leftover from the Cold War: the East African Regional Security Initiative (EARI) was created after the failed military intervention in Somalia, and now Kenya and Uganda, among others, are fighting the (U.S.) “war on terror” in Somalia. Today, Boko Haram’s activities are providing a useful rationale for militarizing North and West Africa, drawing Cameroon and Nigerian into the fold just as Niger and Mali were two years ago. This militarization will breed more, not less, violence: as Nadine Mulembusa points out, teachers in DRC and Rwanda “were unanimous in agreeing that the dynamics of colonialism, dictatorship, and the ensuing militarization of the state … created and maintained a culture of violence in their societies.” Tropes also ignore the ongoing systems of land appropriation and displacement which accompany practices of ethnic reification, which colonial administrations employed as tools to control populations and resources across the continent, and which have been reproduced in numerous ways by many postcolonial African governments and their ex-colonial supporters in Europe and the U.S. (and now, China as well). The intractability of some of these practices and structures breeds conditions for the violence that does occur, as Simangaliso Kumalo laments in his piece on South Africa. Violence, therefore,
needs to be understood in its historical and ongoing global militarized and economic contexts, and Kumalo’s piece cries out in despondence over the situation in South Africa today, especially given its international reputation as a critical site for the philosophical and pragmatic development of nonviolence. The ahistorical nature of many of the lamentations regarding violence on the continent remains a serious problem. This is why Kajsa Hallberg Adu’s piece on the new nonviolent movements in Nigeria is so welcome and probably surprising for many. Not only are its proponents acting in a country usually seen as producing only extremists of all kinds, but they are doing so in ways that reject assistance from the usual crowd of Western benefactors, compelling the audience to understand them as Nigerian and African. As a result, instead of viewing the continent as a hotbed of intractable violence, perhaps it should be seen as a series of sites in which people actively work to stem and overturn systemic injustices. Sometimes these injustices breed continued conflict, but often they result in imaginative theoretical and practical developments of nonviolence which are insufficiently recognized.

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Tanzania@pixabay/creative commons
Today’s South Africa—Why violence? Hope for nonviolence.

One of the biggest challenges of post-apartheid South Africa is the high level of brutal violence and crime. This has been visible in a high incidence of crime, where people have been killed just for their cell phones or car keys. In most of these cases, people already have handed over the keys or the cell phone to the criminal, but they are still killed. The violence has also manifested itself in strikes by workers for incremental wage increases. Whilst one would have hoped they would march peacefully, there are incidents when those who do not take part in the marches are beaten up, vendors have their goods taken away from them, and police are threatened. A number of thinkers have attributed this violence to the violence that was inflicted on people by the apartheid government, seeing this violence as a legacy of the past.

This legacy shows the need for South African society to break the culture of violence and embark on strategy to build a culture of nonviolence and tolerance. At the moment, we do not see much, if any, tangible evidence of a commitment to nonviolence in South Africa. We seem to have forgotten that great philosophy and discipline, which was upheld during the struggle against our people. We seem to be reverting back to violence as a solution to problems.

Those of us who live in Pietermaritzburg, the same town where Mahatma Gandhi lived and practiced his noble principle of Satyagraha, are ashamed that we seem to be forgetting his work and the teaching of Satyagraha. Is it not ironic that every year his work is celebrated through a lecture facilitated by his granddaughter Ela Gandhi, but still we don’t seem to remember his peaceful model of resistance?

Part of the irony is that nonviolence is hard work, much harder than violence itself. It requires more education and discipline. South Africa is no longer a friendly place for civil society, and groups battle to get funding. So even those civil society groups that should be doing work on nonviolence find it hard to survive in such an environment, where there is little funding for their work. We need another reawakening before it is too late.

Recent violence in South Africa.

The past two years in South Africa have been marked by two forms of violence which are interrelated. The first form of violence is the one that is often sparked by service delivery protests but also includes protests against unemployment and corruption. Almost every month we have two or three service delivery–related protests by members of the community. Most of the time people protest that they are not receiving basic services such as water, electricity, and housing. However, these issues often boil over into deeper frustrations with
the lack of employment and the ongoing corruption which is rampant in the country. South Africa is a democratic society where people are allowed to protest freely, but protesters burn government offices, buildings, and libraries, leading many to question why people protest against the lack of services but then destroy some of the services that have been delivered to them. Protesters also channel their anger into xenophobic tendencies, looting markets and shops, especially those owned by foreigners. People are regularly injured, and some even die during these protests.

The second form of violence is perpetrated by the state. The police use excessive force against these protests. In many cases, they have used live bullets. The Marikana massacre, in which 34 striking miners were killed by the police, less than two years ago, and the Commission set up by President Jacob Zuma to investigate “what really happened” in that tragedy drags on. While the situation was clearly very tense on all sides (the protesters, for example, formed a huge crowd armed with traditional weapons), the police came into the situation ready to respond with deadly force. The nation was shocked by the police violence in this massacre as well as others which occurred in the country.

The South African government has both the resources to
deliver services to the people and also professes the political will, yet implementation tends to be extremely slow. As a nation, we do have problems with capacity and skills. This begs the question of how we should analyze the resulting violence on all sides.

**Why the violence:**

- **The legacy of apartheid.**
  South Africa emerged from a decades-long situation where, to obtain any basic services at all, people needed to face and fight a brutal system. To an extent, this has left a considerable amount of residual anger. The result is responses to situations that are frequently worse in other parts of the continent but may not produce the same kind of violence that erupts in South Africa. The wounds of the past are not yet healed.

- **The cry of the poor.**
  For Contextual and Liberation theologians, this term represents the ongoing social costs of long-standing patterns of economic appropriation, colonization and oppression, and the resulting cry – manifested in public and private ways – of those who suffer from these systemic forms of violence. In South Africa, the increasing gap between the poor and the rich is fuelling the anger. People cannot understand how it is difficult for them to receive basic services when they can see others living in extreme and sometimes wasteful luxury. That raises the anger levels and the feelings of disillusionment for the majority of the people. Therefore, they are not necessarily willing to compromise but are prepared to fight to the end to be heard.

- **Political party power struggles.**
  Some violence is connected with power struggles within political parties. Political connections, position and influence have become a matter of life and death in the new dispensation. This is because many people earn a living through their political connections and party involvement. So if people have not made it to the party’s list of nominated candidates, they start disruptions. For instance the ANC itself has had a number of disgruntled senior members who, after not making it to the party list, have caused disruptions of meetings and undermined the leadership. This happened in a number of wards, towns and provinces. So if for some reason they are not happy with the election list or some leader, they then mobilize other disgruntled members to start disruptions.

  The current levels of violence are a threat to South Africa’s future stability. Workers and others who are dispossessed are angry, and security forces have been trained to respond with violence rather than nonviolence. Those, including many religious leaders and organizations, who were at the forefront of nonviolent struggles during apartheid are comparatively quiet today. Part of the reason is that there are few resources today to conduct peacebuilding work – many civil society organizations (especially those unconnected to the government) are struggling to survive. Religious and other civil society groups need to engage in deep soul-searching to reclaim their voices in the ongoing struggle for justice in the country. There is no doubt that suddenly there is a huge vacuum in the social arena. The religious communities are no longer visible and audible in their criticism of what is happening. The other problem is that those who dare to speak out are either dismissed as whining or they get marginalized by some of those in leadership. Religious communities are still trying to understand what it means to be a prophetic voice vis-à-vis a legitimate government.

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South Africa map
image@wikimedia commons
According to Amnesty International, 1500 Nigerians have, in the first three months of 2014, lost their lives to extremist Nigerian movement Boko Haram. As I am writing this, 200 schoolgirls have been missing from their school in the northern Nigerian state of Bornu since mid-April, likely abducted by the same group. In a country where citizens are on their own for organizing almost every aspect of life, be it electricity, health, schooling or security – all this in stark contrast to the affluence the oil industry brings to a select few – there is much to protest about. In Africa’s most populous nation and, since recently, biggest economy, there is diversity in protests as well. While extremist Boko Haram is receiving increased attention in the media worldwide for its horrendous and violent actions, the nonviolent movements Change Movement Nigeria and Enough is Enough Nigeria work mostly under the international news radar.

Change Movement Nigeria

Change Movement Nigeria (CMNG) has met resistance to its activities since its inception. Leader Damilola Adegbeke, in an interview with the author, explained that the organization is not registered, as initial documents were refused by the government and another entity took their name. “Though this does not deter us from organising, we depend solely on donations from members and supporters. We shun foreign finance of the movement because we believe that some of the capitalist foreign donors, especially the corporate bodies, are parts of the problems militating against Africa’s development.”

The organization describes itself as a grassroots organization with cells across the country. Although Mr Adegbeke communicates as the leader of the organization, he is quick to add that the organization is flat, and he has no specific powers. Famous musician Seun Kuti (son of Fela Kuti) is a member. In an interview in UK-based web-magazine The Quietus, Mr Kuti discussed his role in the organization: “Well, I don’t have a role, per se. I am a member. We don’t have a leader. We are all leaders of the group, because we believe it is a new system for African emancipation and enlightenment. We do not ask for foreign donations, we do not want anybody to donate us anything financially. Probably if we just need books we can go to libraries, and we can donate clothes. The only way Africans can come together and
achieve things without having to cry to the West, like beggars, like our rulers do, we want to show that an organisation can be run by Africans, with African ideology and it will work. We are fed up basically. We cannot keep talking, let’s start doing stuff. So that is what this movement is about. A group of young Africans who are tired of talking and want to do stuff, no violence, you know?”

The focus on nonviolent protest is key, Mr Adegoke stressed: “We believe in non-violent protest because we cannot be claiming to fight for justice if we use bully tactics. No violent tactic has ever worked in history because violence will always lead to violence. We therefore condemn every form of violent militancy, because the best way to change a system is by persuasion and dialogue and persistent protest.”

**Enough is Enough Nigeria**

Since 2010, Enough is Enough Nigeria (EiE) has been a coalition of youth organizations working toward good governance through increased political involvement among Nigerian youth. The Executive Director of EiE, Yemi Adamolekun, wrote in an article for the Nigerian newspaper Vanguard that “The electoral process is really more about the four years in between than and the election “event” itself. For example, according to World Bank figures, there will be approximately 20 million new registered voters by 2015. This is huge! It is a significant number, and they need to be educated and engaged.”

EiE staged several large-scale protests in 2010 that were well attended and to some extent covered in media.

In 2013, the RSVP campaign was launched, which aims to encourage voter registration and education.

**Organizing Online**

Although both organizations are active online, EiE makes it clear that using online technology is their main strategy. On their website the organization states: “Given our limited resources – financial, human and time – we have decided to focus on Nigerians of voting age, especially 18–35 year olds, who have access to technology.

There are currently 6.41 million Nigerians on Facebook (as of 31 October, 2012) which is about 43 times the...
reach of the most exaggerated number of Nigeria’s most successful newspaper, therefore the use of technology increases access to information.”

CMNG looks at internet activities a bit differently: “We merge both the online and offline approach to advocacy. We discovered that some individuals have thousands of followers on Twitter and some even have millions of likes on Facebook, but in the real world, they cannot even get fifty people to follow a cause offline. We are committed to using every media possible to bring the people together to demand a just society of our dreams.”

A CMNG project that has received much attention is translating the Nigerian constitution into local languages. The Yoruba translation is complete, and other languages are underway. CMNG is currently organizing the online campaign #stopdreams, which aims to showcase the harm of corruption by having Nigerians taking a photo of themselves in a space that needs improvement and sharing it on social media. The protest campaign culminates with a Lagos demonstration on May 1, 2014. In August 2014, an online conference, iConference, will take place also organized by Change Movement Nigeria.

The invitation states: “This iConference is an online conference committed to uniting all active concerned Nigerians who are online to forge a common position for positive social and political change in the country.”

The organizations also collaborate and share information. The initial silence around the missing girls has given rise to the online campaign #BringBackOurGirls. While the hashtag is trending online — protest marches have been taken offline. The resistance is gaining momentum in Nigeria, and in a matter of time, we will see if it is the nonviolent protests that will echo around the world, or if international media will again focus on more violent protests.

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Read more:
Change Movement Nigeria - http://www.changemovementng.org
Enough is Enough Nigeria - http://eienigeria.org
The Quietus - http://thequietus.com/articles/15001-seun-kuti-interview-fela
The Vanguard - http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/how-much-is-a-nigerian-life-worth-yemi-adamole-kun/#sthash.bDsjR2Fj.dpuf

Nigeria image @ Joachim Huber/creative commons
Peace and Nonviolence Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Notes from the Ground

The importance of investing in peace and nonviolence educational programs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was urged by action research conducted in 2009-2010 by Symphorien Pyana in communities in and around Bukavu, in the province of South Kivu. Pyana’s research had two goals: to analyze the correlation between the persistence of violence in the region and local understandings of peace and conflict, and to examine the effects of the absence or presence of programs and practices focused on peace and nonviolence education regarding conflict in the region.

For the first goal, the research found a significant correlation between the persistence of violence and the relative lack of information about peace accords and causes of conflict in the region. It also found a strong link between inter-communal tensions regarding land and power and forms of political manipulation.

The study also found that political manipulation was assisted by the lack of knowledge of local populations and by a kind of “culture of violence” that affects all spheres of public and private life (family, school, church, etc.) and which concerns the use of force or war as an appropriate method for resolving personal or communal problems.

Regarding the second goal, the research noted that very few centers, schools and universities in the region or the country had developed programs focusing on nonviolence education. This includes programs developed by NGOs. As a result, the population was not aware of peace-centric methods of conflict transformation.

Some schools and universities in the region had developed a paradigm for peace and nonviolence education but their curricula were not yet focused or were insufficiently developed. This lack of peace and nonviolence education programs, as a result, is considered an important component of the fragility of peace and democracy in the region and the country in general. The population strongly recommended that the government and civil society multiply the numbers of centers and programs that specialize in peace and nonviolence education.

Inspired by the results of this action research, the Association of Friends of Father Tony (ASAPT), in partnership with Teachers Without Borders (TWB), began to work on peace and nonviolence education in schools and communities in the region. Using a curriculum...
developed by Dr. Hungwa of TWB, and with support from the Provincial Ministry of Education of South Kivu, they organized a seminar in Bukavu, South Kivu, in February 2011 (details are available at http://www.teacherswithoutborders.org/about-us/news/twb/peace-education-program-planted-democratic-republic-congo).

Teachers shared their experiences as educators and reinforced their training in peace and nonviolence education.

They also expressed their visions and personal hopes regarding the challenges to be overcome and paths to be taken to promote a culture of nonviolence, as well as solidarity between DRC and neighboring Rwanda. These teachers were unanimous in insisting that the long-standing—and ongoing—dynamics of colonization, dictatorship, and militarization of the state influenced human rights violations and created and reinforced a culture of violence in their societies. These dynamics profoundly affected all spheres of social life, including in the schools. The teachers also stated that Congolese society in the Great Lakes Region would continue to confront serious problems of violence if robust investments were not made in projects focusing on the analysis of violence and peace education as engines of transformation from the culture of violence to one of peace and nonviolence.

There were, however, differences in the experiences of teachers from Rwanda and the DRC. While those from Rwanda acknowledged that their government had already agreed to considerable efforts in this direction, those from the DRC noted a kind of indifference, if not even a decrease in attention, by their government to this critical issue. At the end of the seminar, participants recommended that ASAPT and TWB work with teachers and parents to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence in local communities, through the creation of reflection and training groups. As a result, ASAPT and TWB initiated the creation of five such groups in five
schools in the city of Bukavu, including the Institut Supérieur de la Pastorale Familiale (ISPF), Institut Amani, Ecole Primaire d’Ibanda, Ecole Primaire Islamique and Ecole Primaire SNCC/Ustawi.

Reflection groups were organized to be autonomous and were led by a local community member connected to the school or who had taken the seminar. All members joined voluntarily. Clubs organized dialogues and readings and held discussions based on the curriculum of Dr. Joseph Hungwa of TWB. The goal was to provide a foundation in the theories and practice of peace and nonviolence for participants’ daily work. ASAPT and TWB provided technical support as well as monitoring and evaluation of the groups. Participants’ evaluations and experiences were extremely encouraging, necessitating the project’s expansion. As a result, ASAPT decided to extend the project to the national level. ASAPT participated as a partner with the Center for Social Action Studies in two recent action-research projects, one a “Youth Map” created by the International Youth Foundation (March–June 2014) and another concerning a population needs and concerns assessment initiated by the National Democratic Institute (December 2013–February 2014) in the province of Kinshasha.

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Nadine Mulembusa is a journalist who also directs the Association of Friends of Father Tony (ASAPT), a nongovernmental organization working on peace and development issues that focus on youth and children in DRC.
Mahatma Gandhi landed in Durban in 1893. His house in Phoenix Settlement, Durban has been converted to a museum. The original house was destroyed but a new one was reconstructed and a Museum was inaugurated by the President of South Africa in 2000.
Inside the Gandhi Museum, Durban
Additional Resources: Nonviolence in Africa

The articles in this symposium originally appeared in The CIHA Blog (Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa: www.cihablog.com, and on Facebook and Twitter – please join us!). Additional groups, institutes and centers referred to in the symposium include the following, with several additional organizations included, but this list is by no means exhaustive!

- Change Movement Nigeria, http://www.changemovementng.org/, promotes fighting for justice in Nigeria through nonviolence. Moreover, it refuses foreign aid assistance in order to avoid complicity with external actors who have controlled (and prevented) development in Africa.

- Information about the Association des Ami(e)s du Père Tony (ASAPT) can be found at the DRC country page of Teachers Without Borders: http://www.teacherswithoutborders.org/about-us/our-team/country-representatives.

- Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (across Rwanda) is a network of 58 women’s organizations across Rwanda promoting women’s issues, peace and development: http://profemmes-twesehamwe.org/.

- The Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET) brings together women from Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire to achieve a durable peace, understand the mechanisms of peace, security and development, and reinforce women’s participation in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict: http://www.marwopnet.org/.

- The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), based in Accra, Ghana, is a network of over 500 organizations across West Africa which emphasizes collaborative approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the region: www.wanep.org/.

- The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, based was created in 1989 so that its members could “be agents of justice.” The Circle strives “to cultivate a dialogue that will lead to life-giving action” in the midst of suffering and violence: www.thecirclecawt.org

- The World Council of Religions for Peace has branches in most African countries. It also includes regional organizations, such as the African Council of Religious Leaders/Religions for Peace (http://www.acrl-rfp.org/),
which strives to faith leaders have organized under national sections of World Religions for Peace in numerous African countries, which strives “to mobilize African religious communities and their leaders to build peaceful, just and harmonious societies in common action.”

- Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) “is genuinely rooted in the tested African traditions and approaches to peace making. … Its mission is to act positively to establish peace in Africa with the strength of all faiths through engaging all stakeholders” (http://ifapa-africa.weebly.com/).

- Fambul Tok engages in “community led and owned peace building” in Sierra Leone (www.fambultok.org).

- The Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations in Nairobi, Kenya, offers an MA and certificate programs in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and sponsors a monthly Peace Forum along with related workshops and conferences. See http://hipsir.hekima.ac.ke/index.php/contacts.

- The Nairobi Peace Initiative is based in Nairobi but is “a pan-African resource organization committed to the promotion of peaceful transformation of conflict committed to the promotion of peaceful transformation of conflict and reconciliation in Africa” (http://www.npi-africa.org/).

- The Gandhi Development Trust, based in Durban, South Africa, sponsors at least two annual lectures (including the one mentioned by Simangaliso Kumalo) and a variety of other programs on nonviolence. Contact information: PO Box 477, Hyper-by-the-sea, Durban, 4053, South Africa; email egandhi@gdt.org.za.

- See also the article about how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. drew inspiration from nonviolent struggles in Africa: (http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/teaching-and-learning-civil-resistance-in-west-africa/).

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