



Self-Study Transcripts

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Person Power	4
What is Person Power?	4
How Can I Develop Person Power?.....	6
Point 1: Don't Buy the Message of the Commercial Media.....	7
Point 2: Learn Nonviolence	9
Point 3: Adopt a Spiritual Practice that Works for You	11
Point 4: Practice Personhood	13
Point 5: Nonviolence is a Bridge	15
What is Love?	17
An Expression of Love: Putting Others First	19
Peace as a Paradigm Shift	21
Constructive Program	23
Constructive Program Principles	23
Principle 1:.....	23
Principle 2:	25
Principle 3:	27
Principle 4:.....	29
Principle 5:.....	31
Constructive Program Strategies.....	33
Strategy 1:.....	33
Strategy 2:	35
Strategy 3:	37
Strategy 4:.....	39
Strategy 5:.....	41
Satyagraha	43
When Is Satyagraha Necessary?	43



What Is Satyagraha?..... 44

What are the guidelines for Satyagraha? 45

Is Satyagraha, “Moving the Heart?”47

How does one train for Satyagraha? 49

How do I evaluate its effectiveness?51

How do I evaluate its effectiveness? 53

What Comes Next? 55

Person Power

[What is Person Power?](#)

Michael: In a way, person power is the core, not only of what we call, “Principled nonviolence,” we think it’s the core of the shift to a new paradigm. Because the prevailing paradigm has as maybe it’s central misconception, the emptiness, the perilousness of the individual. And the way that nonviolence really poses a counterpoise, an antidote to that misconception is to say that, “No, that’s quite mistaken. The greatest power lives within the individual.

This is not to say that that power is already available to us. It usually isn’t accessible in most individuals. But when it becomes accessible, it does incredible things. And of course, the example that comes most readily to our minds is Mahatma Gandhi. When he came back to India in 1916 he was one person. And he said, “I can liberate this country from the greatest empire the world has ever seen. And I can do it without firing a shot.” And at first, people thought he was crazy. But guess what? 30 years later, he delivered.

And he did that all by generating a power within himself which resonated very powerfully, first of all, with the immediate followers that were with him in his ashram. And then through that magnified individual had this tremendous impact on the entire social field, the British rulers, the Indians themselves.

I know from personal experience of hearing it from my own spiritual teacher. He was growing up in India at that time and he was not political. So, he didn’t “follow Gandhi.” But he was so deeply moved by Gandhi’s actions and his example that when Gandhi went on a fast, Sri Easwaran found it difficult to eat. You know, he would sit down, look at his food, and not be able to take his food. In just one little anecdote, I think one little vignette we get a sense of the tremendous power that is resident within us.

And in 1986 there was an uprising in the Philippines which was successful. It dislodged a deeply entrenched repressive military regime. And the term people power was coined to explain what the power was that had dislodged that regime. It was looked at from the outside, the power of a large number of aroused individuals. But looked at from the inside, it was the power within those individuals. And in fact, one of the cardinals who played in that revolution said, “2 million people went out in the street. But you know what? It was a miracle because every individual said to himself I am going to go out. I can do this thing.” Said to herself, “This is something I’m ready to risk my life for.”

And so, we here at Metta coined the term “Person Power” to focus really on that power within the individual. Now, sometimes when people hear, “Person power,” they think we mean, you know, like the tank man. There’s one individual standing there blocking the whole army. Yeah, that can happen, but that’s not exactly what we mean.

More typically, person power enables an individual to make a tremendous sacrifice that galvanizes other people. And so, they act as a magnifier for this energy, just as when we put a million men in the same uniforms and put them out in the field with weapons, we’re

magnifying the power of hatred, anger, and hostility. When we galvanize the power within an individual, she or he can arouse individuals to act with her or him.

So, it's very dramatic when a single individual stands up against a whole system. And there are cases of that. I can think of a similar example with my good friend Daniel Ellsberg who was in a position to reveal the falsehoods that were surrounding the Vietnam War and was able to reveal that to the public and it had a major impact on bringing that war to a halt.

It wasn't sufficient unto itself to do that, but it had a big impact. It softened up the people. So, Dan did have to go through a remarkable individual transformation to mobilize that power. And the way he described it to me was very interesting. He had been asking himself the question, "Gosh, if I release these documents, what will they do to me?" And he succeeded in paralyzing himself by asking that question.

But one day, mostly under the influence of his wife, Patricia, I believe, he found himself asking an entirely different question. He said, "If I'm willing to go to jail, what does that allow me to do?" And immediately, it became clear to him. "I am willing to go to jail for this. And that means that I can release these papers to the American public that deserves them."

And the end result, actually, in the event, Dan did not go to jail, which I'm not sure a whistleblower would have that kind of immunity today. But it is a good illustration of what a well-placed individual can do. But real person power means when we overcome fear and anger and greed within ourselves, we create our own position. We can find a way into a situation so that the power that we have discovered and mobilized within ourselves can have its impact on the situation.

How Can I Develop Person Power?

Michael: That is a wonderful question. And that is, of course, the key question. And this is going to be partly an individual matter. On one level, what you're going to do to develop it is different from what I have to do to develop it. But underneath, we're all doing the same thing. We are finding ways of reducing the influence of the conditioning in our mind that a rather disoriented culture has put in there. And replacing it with a more kind of natural spontaneous creative energy. And of course, what we're talking about here is not just a political mechanism. We're talking about realizing our deepest potential. We're talking about our own happiness. We're talking about our personal freedom.

So, here at the Metta Center, we've developed a program which has five points and which I think is doable for anyone. And you know, it doesn't necessarily lead to satori, but it certainly leads to an individual being more fulfilled, more capable of finding his or her niche for actively participating in a great cultural revolution. And ultimately to, as I say, a sense of fulfillment and personal freedom.

Point 1: Don't Buy the Message of the Commercial Media.

Michael: We put this very unpopular point first because it is, after all, the primary thing. We need to cleanse the mind just as we every now and then go and buy some stuff in a health food store and cleanse the body. We have been subjected in our civilization – I'm speaking here of Western industrialized countries or Eastern industrialized countries for that matter. We have been subjected to years and years of rather disorientating conditioning.

And we here at Metta feel that this is really what's keeping humanity back. This is the stumbling block to preventing us from unleashing the great shift. Call it, "A great turning," or what you will. The fact of the matter is if you live in this civilization you are exposed to between 3-5000 commercial messages every day. And if you analyze those messages, what are they telling you?

Underneath the surface message which is, you know, "Buy this kind of cigarette or that kind of toothpaste. Or put your money in this kind of bank." Underneath that message, they're all telling you that you do not have the resources within yourself to be fulfilled and happy. Remember, this is – we identified this as the biggest misconception of corporate civilization. "Homo-commercialis," I sometimes say, the commercialized human being – depersonalized human being.

So, this is, if you will, the biggest lie, the lie that happiness does not lie within us. It lies outside us, and we have to buy it. But in the words of a great spiritual teacher of modern India, Sri Ramana Maharshi, he pointed out very simply and very straightforwardly, there is no happiness in any object of the world. So, it's by constantly looking outside of ourselves for fulfillment that we overlook the power that is within us.

And we may think that, "Oh, I'm very sophisticated. I don't believe all of this stuff, so watching this commercial media isn't going to bother me any." But many studies have shown that underlying messages are more powerful than surface messages. And those underlying messages get deep into our consciousness through constant repetition.

So, the final solution which is, you know, quite unpopular and requires some self-sacrifice and some renunciation, but you know, no pain, no gain in this business. The final solution is just boycott the darn things. I mean I never had a television set in my possession in my home from the day that I left for college. And I think I'm pretty aware of what's going on in the world. And I'm a much happier person for it.

Thousands of families have tried the experiments of not watching television for a period of time. And what they immediately discover, interestingly enough, is that the kids fight a lot more because they've been sitting mesmerized in front of the TV. But then by fighting and arguing and tussling with one another, they work their problems out instead of suppressing them. And when those problems are worked out, the family is much more cohesive.

And I have a strong feeling that the destruction of the modern family is largely due to the stupefaction of individuals who then don't face one another and don't work out their destiny in interaction with one another. They don't live in a human world anymore. They live in the idealized world of these commercial fantasies. So, if we decide that as far as in us lies, as far as we can control our environment, we're not going to watch TV. We're going to get our news from alternative media. We're going to only watch films that don't exploit violence and exploit us in the process, that don't exploit vulgarity, that don't create a very low, empty, separate, crass image of the human being.

If we'd make that decision, we're clearing out a lot of these old superstitious cobwebs about the human being being a separate personal object, condemned to compete for scarce resources. We'll still see plenty of this stuff because, you know, walking down the street, looking at the side of a bus, we'll see it. But I think it's extremely important to make that effort of will to sequester ourselves from that influence. When we make that effort of will, I think that in itself is a big protection.

And I'm speaking here as a person who has done this himself for a long time. And I have found it's, you know, it's very healthy and I don't feel like I'm missing anything. Especially, if we follow this up with the other four points.

Point 2: Learn Nonviolence

Michael: Great. So, you've really set the stage. Now you've cleaned out the commercial imagery in your mind that's telling you that you're small, helpless, empty and that you'll only be made happy by consuming external things. You have slowed your mind down and kind of poised it for taking in positive imagery. You have some pretty good impulse control coming along. So, if you go out on a picket line, for example, if you're an activist and there's a threat – or any kind of threat. I mean we're all faced with threatening situations. Just go out on the highway – you're less likely to explode in anger.

Now, how do you turn yourself into an effective force for social change? The answer to that is really simple. Nonviolence is the secret. Learn everything you can about nonviolence. And when we say, "Learn nonviolence," that is deliberately kind of an ambiguity. There's at least two levels on which this wants to go forward.

For one thing, you want to learn what the great nonviolence practitioners have taught. There is a science of nonviolence. I mean just knowing that fact already puts you way ahead of the game. A large number of people think if they go out on a picket line and they smile, that they're being nonviolent. And well, yeah, okay. But they're not exhausting the power of nonviolence.

One of our mission statements – and we do explore different mission statements at different times, but we always have the same mission. One of the things we say is that we are trying to help activists or anyone who wants to practice nonviolence to do so more safely and more effectively. And it turns out that there's a lot you can learn.

I'm probably one of hundreds of individuals who have written in-depth books about this subject. Mine is called, "The Search for Nonviolent Future." The Metta Center is one of maybe a couple of dozen of organizations and websites that convey information about the history of nonviolence, the theory of nonviolence, the various fields of its application.

But I would, of course, recommend our own website as one place to start. Mettacenter.org. Metta with two T's. And make a systematic study of this subject. And you will find that as Gandhi always insisted, this is a science. It is a rich intellectually rewarding subject. So, that's the first part.

But if you only learn about it and it only becomes head knowledge – you know, don't get me wrong, it's inspiring. It's fun. It's wonderful. But your exposure to and assimilation of nonviolence will be quite incomplete. The other aspect is to test it. Put it in practice. So, you may read, for example, in my book, that if something produces anger in me and I decide not to express that anger, but not to repress it, it will be converted into a creative force. Fine.

But it's just going to stay there floating on the surface until somebody comes along – even it could be your dog or a machine, like my computer that doesn't always do what I want it to do, and I get angry. I have a friend who was faced with an extremely violent, very dangerous situation in Africa. A child soldier had just killed somebody and was pointing

the rifle now at my friend. My friend had his sidearm and was reaching for his sidearm because that was his training.

And suddenly, the idea that occurred to him, that maybe nonviolence isn't bunk. He just had a seminar with me. Those ideas were floating around in his head. And in that crisis, in that desperately dangerous situation where seconds counted, he decided to give it a try. He put his hands out in front of him empty, with no weapon, looked that young guy – that kid in the eye, and walked slowly up to him. Disarmed him and handed him over to people who could take care of him.

Now, I bet you that my friend's "knowledge" of nonviolence was a heck of a lot deeper after he had actually put it in practice. Now, I'm not suggesting that we do it – that we wait for such a dangerous desperate situation, but any moment of the day when you have a fear, when you're greedy about something that you know isn't good for you, and especially when there's somebody threatening you. And you decide, "I am not going to hate that person. I am not going to run away in fear. I am not going to do what he is threatening me to do. But at the same time, I am not going to disrespect that person or myself."

You will then find that some creative response will come out of you that you didn't even know you were capable of. It will happen 99 times out of 100. It happens to all of us all the time. But we don't have a theory. We don't have a model to put it in, so it just floats away. That's the virtue of learning about nonviolence academically. It gives you those explanations so that by using our mind and our heart together, it helps us to hold onto this precious topic.

So, go ahead, you know, read some books. Get a hold of our website, mettacenter.org, look around for ways to put this into practice. And what you'll be doing is giving a very healthy substitute for the toxic commercial culture that you so wisely got rid of following Point 1.

Point 3: Adopt a Spiritual Practice that Works for You

Michael: If you followed our advice for Point 1, and I hope you did, and you're now cut way, way back, maybe to zero on your watching of commercial mass media, you are, in a way, clearing out some space in your mind. And what is going to fill that space? Well, that's where we make a deliberate effort to make sure that the space that's been vacated is filled with positive imagery. Now, this is a very personal matter. Some people find one kind of meditation practice for them than another.

And at Metta, you know, we have our own suggestion to make, but we do recognize that it's only our personal suggestion. I think it will work very well for most anybody. But there's no difficulty at all with your finding a spiritual practice of your own. And when we say a spiritual practice, I don't mean a spiritual practice that you make up. I mean finding one on your own.

And when we say, "A spiritual practice," I guess I'm thinking primarily about the ancient practice of meditation. Because as Thich Nhat Hanh has pointed out, as Mahatma Gandhi has pointed out, you may believe in nonviolence, but when you go out there and you're facing the police dogs or the people are bearing down on you with lathis or whatever, that nonviolence is going to fly out the window unless you have been strengthening it every single day with a practice of meditation. And as far as I am aware, meditation means willfully, steadily, compassionately, patiently, controlling the thought process in your own mind.

And you're trying to do two things. You're trying to slow that thought process down. Because, in fact, we've been speeded up greatly by modern conditions. And you're trying to put not only positive but inspiring images in your head. And those two things work very well together. When you think negative things, your mind speeds up. When your mind speeds up, you tend to think negative thoughts.

Conversely, when you have something inspiring, an image of a great human being or a profound piece of wisdom, in your mind, your mind will slow down and you will tend, at a very deep level, to concentrate on that beautiful message. So, we find that the practice called, "Passage meditation," which you can find out about on a website called, www.easwaran.org, is one that we can recommend in full confidence.

But I say again that different people find different things helpful for them. What you want to do is find a practice which slowly brings your own mind under control. And you have to do this yourself. We're not talking here about hypnotism or making yourself unnecessarily vulnerable to others. If you're looking around for a spiritual practice, one criterion that you can use is plausibility. You know, back in the old days in Berkeley, I remember every imaginable thing was going on and there was even something called, "Chaotic meditation." Well, what you're trying to accomplish in meditation is the exact opposite of chaos. So, that was on the surface already not a good idea.

Secondly, if there's a teacher – and we do find, incidentally, that a teacher living or otherwise is just about indispensable. If there's a teacher, what did she or he live like? Did

they ride around in a Rolls Royce and did they have armed bodyguards? Do they have all kinds of dubious habits? Or were they simply, sincere, genuine human beings who didn't need you for anything, but just wanted to help? That's the second criterion.

And the third is, you know, look at the followers. If there's, you know, thousands of people who have been Practice X, Y, or Z, look and see what's happened to them in the course of some years. And then the fourth and final and most important criterion is to go ahead and give it a try. But it is very helpful not to jump from practice to practice. If you find one that looks like it could work for you, give yourself to it. Give yourself a period of time to see what it feels like. It's not going to feel like a lot of fun, but at the end, you'll look back and say, "Okay, I used to be addicted to chewing gum. And you know what? I haven't thought about chewing gum for five straight days. Something is going on here."

So, your own experiences are going to be the final criterion and in everything that we have to suggest here is about developing your own sensitivity and your own responsibility. So, that's what we would recommend, passage meditation that's taught by the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation at Easwaran.org, or some other practice which can really enable you to fill your mind with inspiring, uplifting thoughts and images and get some of your more undesired impulses under control.

Point 4: Practice Personhood

Michael: Back in Point 1 about not buying the message of the commercial media, we pointed out – and I'd like to emphasize it here, that consuming material goods does not make us happy, even though advertisers try to convince us that it does. But as I was quoting from Sri Ramana Maharshi, there is no happiness in the material world. There is no happiness in any object of the world was how he put it.

So, if consuming physical objects doesn't make us happy, what does? Well, it turns out that what really is fulfilling for human beings is connectedness. It's relationships. And this can even be described on the level of health. It's been shown that people who enter, say, a facility for rehabilitation who have a lot of friends and community around them will get better much faster than loners.

There was a little town in Italy which was studied by actuarial statistics for insurance companies because people in that town were not getting heart disease like the rest of the country. And they thought, "Oh, they must have this great diet." Well, it turned out they had a terrible diet. There's all this greasy stuff. But the whole town had been settled by Italians. And it was like one big family there. There was one baby that was born in this little town that someone counted, they were kissed by 248 people by the end of the second day of its life.

So, getting together at a deep level with people, cultivating relationships of service, and help with them is a powerful way for us to overcome the perilousness and depression that we feel. And it's a perfect example of what we like to call here at Metta, "A stealth mechanism." In other words, it's something that you can do which is not going to irritate the opposition. They won't recognize it as a threat. Yet, it builds up to a very serious counterpoise against the prevailing system, which is always trying to alienate and isolate us.

We were just having a conversation here this morning where people pointed out that tyrants tremble when people dance in the street. Well, whether they think about it or not or whether their classical old-fashioned tyrants or not, there is a drive in our modern civilization, I would say, close to the core of our modern civilization, to isolate us. We use technology to keep ourselves apart from another. I'm old enough to remember the days when you'd get into a gas station, you would drive in – well, first of all, gas would be like 48 cents a gallon.

And you would talk to a station attendant and say, "You know, fill her up and give me this. Where's your air and water? And hey, how's the kids?" But now, of course, you just stick a piece of plastic in a machine and drive away without talking to anyone. This is one of several hundred examples.

So, if you've been following points 1 through 3 you are in a superb position to strike up deeper and closer relationships with other people, to even build community in your neighborhoods or in your place of work. And this is a very powerful way to start creating the networks that we're going to need when the action really gets intense in this shift to a new paradigm. Something which in itself we'll be talking about pretty soon.

So, instead of emailing a person, if you have the chance, call them. Instead of calling a person, go and sit and talk with them. Yeah, there will be problems. There will be difficulties. But remember what we said when we were talking about getting rid of the television, getting it out of our household, out of not being the focus of our family, once we get together with people and work out our disagreements with them, we will be in a much closer place. We will feel much more deeply connected with the rest of humanity. We ourselves will be much less of a contributor to the alienation and violence. And by the way, alienation and violence are just two sides of the same coin.

And in addition, as I say, we'll be building up the networks of support that we need that will help us when the going really gets tough. So, for all of those reasons, we say, "Practice the principle on which this whole shift is based, namely the primacy of the human individual. That definitely does not mean the primacy of the isolated individual. Remember, we were saying that Tank Man, standing in front of a column of tanks all by himself is a powerful, evocative image, but the really powerful human being is she or he who is deeply aware of her or his interconnectedness with other beings and can influence them on that very deep level.

So, there will be thousands of creative ways that you will be able to think of to make your life more personal without invoking more conflict than is necessary. And this kind of expansion will not only make you healthier and happier, but it has a direct political significance of exactly the kind that we need.

Point 5: Nonviolence is a Bridge

Michael: This is excellent. This shows us that we do not have to sacrifice our personal wellbeing in order to be effective socially, and vice versa. But if you've been doing the things that we've been mentioning in terms of developing your own person power and you now want to make a contribution to the world, and if you run out and trying to make that contribution in an aggressive, abusive confrontational way, you will dissipate everything that you've benefitted so far, by having a spiritual practice, getting good imagery into your head, and so forth.

But if you are developing spirituality, you cannot sit idle and cheat the world of the contribution that you can make. You must act. This is what the Bhagavad Gita is all about. So, how can you act without dissipating, without going backwards, without wasting the benefit, the peace, the deeper awareness of life that you've gained. You can only do that, and you must do that through nonviolence.

Nonviolence is much bigger than just going out and eschewing a physical violent act with somebody. It covers your attitude. It covers your planning. It covers the whole field of social action. So, what you want to do now is ask yourself quite honestly, "What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses? Where can I act in such a way that my strengths will be of benefit to the social system and will be a benefit to me spiritually? How can I work on some of those weaknesses while making myself available for social action?"

We have one friend, for example, who is terribly shy about crowds. So, what he did was put on a huge conference where he had to talk to hundreds of people. And that made him, as he said, very poignantly at one time in that process, "My dream is much stronger than my problem."

So, ask yourself – you're probably working on something already, ask yourself, "How does my project fit in to the whole shift?" As you're probably aware by now, we have created an image, a scheme, called, "Roadmap," here at the Metta Center which is designed to help people see where their project fits into the whole.

Ask yourself, is this potentially, at least, what we like to call a keystone project. That is if my project is successful, if I accomplish everything that I want to with this project, will it really make a dent in the war system? In the corporate rule system? Because there are some projects where you might – you get into a silo and you might only be cleaning up one little problem and it will not have an impact on the really destructive systems that have gone so desperately out of control.

Now, any project can have such an impact if we also take the trouble to do what's called in the peace movement, "Interpretation." Let's say I'm just reforming one little piece of society, but if I also take the time to show that you see I've done this thing and it worked. It helped me. It makes hundreds of people feel better. This shows us that there must be a different model for human interaction.

So, any good project can be made to have an impact on the whole, but some will have much greater impact and we should think about where we can use our energies with the

greatest leverage. Just looking at the Roadmap we have found that people immediately feel that they're less isolated from one another, that they're getting out of that silo, so that helps very much.

And we can share with you, I think, two other rules of thumb, two other guidelines that you might want to look at. One is it is always better to prioritize working on a constructive alternative over direct confrontation whenever that's possible. There are some things that simply cannot be allowed to go on. They've got to be addressed. But wherever possible, it's more powerful, it's more revolutionary in the long run to build the world that you want rather than ask other people to stop giving you the world that you don't want.

In fact, I think it was Buckminster Fuller who said, "You can never make a bad system go away by attacking it. The only way to really make it go away is to create a better system which renders it irrelevant." So, look around for a constructive way that will have revolutionary potential because if you carry through with it, there will come a point when opposition will definitely arouse itself. But at that point, you see, you will be in a position of advantage because you won't be only reacting to something negative, you will be proactive about something positive.

The other rule of thumb or principle that you might want to think about is Gandhi's wonderful concept of swadeshi which means – especially when you're going to serve the world, don't overlook your surrounding community. Don't overlook the people that are closest to you. You can usually be more effective with people who know you better. That's why Gandhi refused to leave India and carry his message to the United States personally. But he did say, "If I do my work well here, someone in the United States might pick it up." And of course, Martin Luther King did exactly that.

So, if you find something that works for you because you know the community that you are in and they know you and they trust you because you know a certain field very well, and you get to work within that center within that circle, if you do your work well in that circle you will inevitably find that its influence expands. I mean look at Gandhiji himself. He came back to India at the conclusion of his work in South Africa. And he started working on small local issues in Gujarat, his home state. And because of his successes there that radiated out to the rest of the country. And through his work in India, it radiated out to the rest of the world.

So, when you are undertaking this very creative process and looking at what is your best contribution to the world, bear those guidelines in mind and they might help you. Swadeshi, where is my personal circle, and how can I find a constructive program that will be my entre into joining with many other people and organizations to change the world to a place of peace and justice.

[What is Love?](#)

Nonviolence is sometimes referred to as, “Love in action.” How do you understand love?

Michael: Wow. I wish I could say that I do understand it. But of course, I have some understanding of it, as we all do. The more you work with nonviolence the more you realize that it is practically identical with love when love is well understood. What you're dealing with in love is the most powerful force in the universe. It probably has all the self-organizing properties that we want to develop a new world. Love is a precious skill. The same statement could be made of nonviolence.

There's a statement in the Bhagavad Gita that yoga or meditation is skill in action. And that very well defines also an aspect of what we mean by love. For me, I think for most nonviolence practitioners, the most important first step is love is way beyond and perhaps not even identical with the sentiment, the emotion that we usually connect with that word. And I think Hollywood has done us a disservice, you know?

Love is not something that you “fall into” the way you fall into an open manhole. Love requires a great deal of self-struggle. When Gandhi's wife was once asked, “How many children do you have?” She said, “Well it depends whom you ask. I have four. He has 400 million.” In other words, Gandhi's love for the entire population of India was as great, as intense, as personal as her love was for the four children that she had born through her own body.

An important way of thinking about love for us is that love arises from the awareness of unity. It arises from the awareness that I cannot possibly benefit from hurting another person. So, here's where you begin to see that love and nonviolence are practically indistinguishable.

Gandhi said that there is a force which keeps this universe of ours from flying apart and without that force we would fly into atoms in a second. And the name of that force on the physical plane is gravity. But that force also operates on the human plane. On that level it's called, “Love.”

So, there's at least a powerful analogy if not a different aspect of the same thing. The attractive force among objects which is called gravity is parallel to the attractive force among creatures which is called love. But attraction doesn't necessarily mean physical attraction in this case.

What it means is, when you are spontaneously aware of the welfare of the other party. In this case, in the other person. So, when you've reached the point where the other person's welfare is more important to you than your own, you're in love with that person and not before then. And you can see what a wonderful mechanism this is for helping us reduce our own egotism.

Because if you practice what my spiritual teacher called, “Putting others first,” and not putting yourself first, you’re forgetting about your own personal separative needs in the welfare of other people. And all your ambition to help the world can be directed outwards at others, not at gratifying yourself, which liberates you from the clutches of the mass media and all that commercialism.

Now, the difficulty with what I’m calling, “The Hollywood concept of love,” is that it’s so limited. You can only love maybe one or a few people at a time. And even there you can’t love the whole person, right? It’s really – if you suddenly don’t like their smile or something like that, you “fall out of love” with them. It’s all tangled up with their physical appearance, which of course, is changing drastically all the time. It never stops. It’s never the same for an instant.

But when you love another person spirituality, meaning when you want their welfare more than you want your own, when you reach the point where you’re willing to sacrifice for the welfare of another person, that is a very – it leads to great growth for yourself, spiritually. And it leads to your introducing this energy of unity. What Kenneth Boulding called, “Integrative power,” into the world.

And when that integrative power, when that vision of unity runs into opposition, and when you find you have to struggle against – not against another person, but against the project of another person, then your love has become love in action. And that’s what we typically refer to as nonviolence. So, true love will, among other things, lead to a great deal of skill in communication. And our friends who practice nonviolent communication will be very good at explaining this because you will begin to understand intuitively what the other person really wants. And it will enable you, sometimes, to give them resistance because you want to do your bit to prevent them from doing something that will harm themselves.

So, love is not a popularity contest. It is an engagement with the other which enables you to forget your own welfare in the context of the welfare of the whole. And practically everything that I’ve said so far is identical with nonviolence. The only thing I would like to add, and I don’t think this will be a difference either, is that ultimately – and I would never have realized this if it weren’t for my spiritual teacher – ultimately, the goal that we have is not to love X number of people or Y number of people, but to become love itself.

Which means that you become a channel, if you will, for that creative force of the universe which has brought us into existence, and which will bring us into a much richer existence if we learn how to cooperate with it. I wonder if I’ve really done this wonderful subject justice, but at least I think these may be some useful guidelines.

An Expression of Love: Putting Others First

You've often referred to the idea of putting others first. What's the best way we can do that?

Michael: One safe way to start, but again, it turns into a deep subject and we have to explore it carefully and avoid certain misconceptions – is this great idea that Gandhi had of service. And it's been shown scientifically that unless we have a way of serving others we feel useless. We have to serve somehow. And he called his second ashram in India, "Sevagram," which literally means Service Village – Village of Service. The whole point of it was to be a service center for the country.

Often for Gandhi it meant taking up the lowest work available because people who had been relegated to doing what was regarded as unsanitary work had been stigmatized over the centuries. And he felt that he could best serve their needs by picking up the pail and going and cleaning the toilets side by side with them.

Here he was in the eyes of many, the greatest and most revered person in the entire nation, the rescuer of India's ancient civilization, and you would see him with his little broom and pail going out to clean the latrines. He was serving the most prejudiced against and disadvantaged people in the community. So, this doesn't mean that we have to do that kind of work necessarily. But it does show is something to keep in mind, that sometimes the lowest work can lead to the highest goal.

To go to that higher perspective, Gandhi was also a great leader and he practiced something that we often call today, "Servant leadership." That is, he never said, "I'm going to make the people follow me to get what I want." He said, "What do the people want? I'm a facilitator. How can I help them to get it?" We've spoken elsewhere about Gandhi's leadership, but you know often we're told that we can "serve our country" by military service.

And for a nonviolent person, yeah, you're serving your country, but first of all, what in your country are you serving? Are you serving its ability to dominate others? In the long run, you're not leading to their benefit by doing that. And what in you are you serving your country with? With your capacity to be violent, that means you're not developing yourself. On the contrary, you're putting yourself back in evolution.

So, a person who is a conscientious objector – I'm just using this as an example – is serving the country in a much higher and much deeper sense than somebody who goes along with what the collective of the country seems to want of him or her at that moment. So, I emphasize this because serving others does not just mean self-effacement. It means effacing our cowardly self, effacing our smaller self, and allowing our deeper self, the self that's aware of our connectedness with others to come forth.

And it was primarily in this question of service which everyone feels called upon to do, that Gandhi said that swadeshi was important. Don't give yourself a grand scheme of saving the world from war. This is a little bit embarrassing because this is what I'm trying to do. But find the circle immediately around you that you can serve. And you can serve the

larger collective through that circle. And that allows you to multiply your effectiveness and it also enables you to overcome the angles and corners in your personality most efficiently.

Now, service is not an idea that is highly regarded except in that one military context which I regard as a kind of misunderstanding. We all want to have technology and people serve us and we don't want to be of service to others. And I think that when we adopt that ideology from the surrounding world, we're really violating one of our deepest needs.

I know I mentioned this before, but I think until and unless we find a way that we can serve others, we won't be fulfilled. And what we need to bear in mind in terms of serving others is we're serving their underlying welfare. We're not serving their whims and caprices. Often, if you're a parent, you have to go against what your child wants in order to serve their deepest welfare. And we should not shun that responsibility.

If we've been deeply immersed in nonviolence, we will probably understand something about the welfare of society that the majority of our fellow citizens don't understand. So, when this is properly understood and when you say to yourself, "I may be making a mistake here, but I'm going to do what I think is most important for you and disregard my own welfare in the process." What I'm doing is I'm breaking apart the paradigm of separation that keeps us apart.

Because that paradigm of separation says, "My welfare is separate from yours. You may even have to suffer for me to be fulfilled." That is the biggest misunderstanding that's running around out there in our civilization today.

So, when you turn your face against that and say, "No, our wellbeing is completely interlocked. The most efficient way for me to serve my own wellbeing to be happy is to forget about it and serve your wellbeing," you're powerfully breaking through that illusion of separateness, that sense of alienation. And that's the most powerful nonviolent act that we can undertake.

Peace as a Paradigm Shift

You've written an article called, "Peace as a Paradigm Shift." What did you mean by that?

Michael: I take it that we kind of agree what we mean by peace for the time being. So, the question is about what we mean by a paradigm shift. And it's a very important one because if people think that nonviolence is just kind of a way of behaving that might attract less harm, they don't understand that nonviolence really implies a total change in our way of seeing the world, of thinking of ourselves and what our relationship is to one another.

And it's a deep change that will affect every aspect of life. And when it's completed, it will run through the whole of civilization. So, it won't just be, "Oh, I see things differently. You're willing to see – you can see things your way." Right now, we're operating under a paradigm or a frame of reference that has several fundamental characteristics which turn out to be quite destructive. They turn out to be harmful. One element of this harmful paradigm is that the fundamental reality of the universe is matter. Everything comes out of matter. From matter derives energy. From energy derives the appearance of consciousness.

Another aspect of it is because it's material, everything is separate. I could – perfectly possible that I could be fulfilled in a way that would impede your fulfillment. And thirdly and finally, it's a world view which leads to deep alienation. It leads to incredible dissatisfaction. It leads to destruction of the planet because we're constantly trying to exploit its resources to make ourselves happy. When we've long since passed the point of material objects having the capacity to make us happy.

So, to bring about a nonviolent future, to leave in a world of peace and justice, it's not going to happen if we just change this one injustice over here or change that injustice over there. Ultimately, we have to find a way to change people's whole vision of the world. And well, to give you one little example that I refer to in my book, *Search for Nonviolent Future*, there was a nurse in an emergency room in a Los Angeles hospital. And a woman burst into that room with a handgun. She had just tried to shoot another nurse.

And this nurse that we're talking about, Joan Black, went over to that woman, put her hand on her arm that had the gun, started talking to her. And very skillfully calmed her down to the point where she was willing to give up the weapon, broke down and cried, and then they tried to help her.

So, later on, journalists asked her, "Whoa. You know, how did you do that?" And she said, "I did not see a distraught person. I did not see a threatening figure. I saw a patient. I saw a sick person, a hurting person coming through that door. And I'm a nurse. I know how to deal with hurting people. That's what I'm trained to do."

So, when we talk about a paradigm shift, we're going to talk about a world where everyone sees one another in that helpful, nurturing, unified way. Not as a potential threat. Not as a potential competitor. And ultimately, this paradigm shift is going to go right across the board from what we believe the fundamental constituents of the outside world are, to what we believe the fundamental constituents of the inside world are. And in fact, even the

belief that there is an inside world is kind of a paradigm shift because another component of the prevailing paradigm is that everything is external.

Of course, if you look at the world, you see a lot of difference. But are we to do with that difference? Right now, most of the difference that we see is understood under a label of separateness. You know, because you look a little different from myself, you and I are separate. Because you live in another country or you belong to another race, you and I are separate. But what we want in the great paradigm shift that's trying to happen, we're still going to see all of that difference, but it won't be separateness. It'll be diversity. It will be the outward manifestation of an inner unity.

So, every place you look, things are going to be construed differently. There's a really fun example of this that originated in the small Himalayan state of Bhutan. They decided instead of registering their gross national product and registering that with economic entities in the U.N., they're going to forget about the gross national product. Heck, we're not material objects here. We're subjective human beings with a desire for happiness and service and so forth. So, instead, we're going to look at the gross national happiness.

And that little change is part of a big paradigm shift. And I'm happy to say that that little change is spreading. We are going to look for lots of other little changes, but I think it's important that we keep in mind the big picture, the overview that these little changes fit into. So, welcome aboard. This is the great turning, and this is the progress from a paradigm of separateness, exteriority, and materialism, to a paradigm of unity, interiority, and connectedness.

The fundamental shift, therefore, that we really need to bring about, and which will be very rewarding to bring about is a change in the human image. What do we think we are and what do we think others are? And how is the relationship between and among us to be realized? And this is why we constantly stress nonviolence because conflict will arise. Those conflicts are all conflicts in perception. There is no really unavoidable underlying conflict between or among any of us.

My wellbeing is a part of your wellbeing and vice versa. As Martin Luther King once brilliantly said, "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." That was a beautiful succinct definition of how we're going to look to one another in the new paradigm.

Not as competitors. Not as people whose wellbeing may have to be sacrificed for our own, or vice versa. Not as people whose wellbeing has to be achieved independently, totally independently, but rather entities whose wellbeing is interconnected with one another.

So, this is a tremendous shift and it's very exciting to be living at this time in evolutionary history when we can actually play a part in bringing this about. I think many of us have begun to realize that until and unless we bring this about, nothing will save us from competition and violence. So, again, welcome aboard the great turning.

Constructive Program

Constructive Program Principles

Principle 1:

Constructive Program is the scaffolding upon which the structure of a new society will be built while struggling against the old.

Michael: I would say that it's almost being built before you undertake the struggle against the old. Gandhi said if you think they were going to win our freedom and then fix India's problems, you're dreaming. We have to fix those problems first, strengthen ourselves, deal with our own weaknesses, and then freedom will follow as a matter of course. And it will be really easy.

He also made an interesting parallel. He said that satyagrahis—soldiers of nonviolence—need at least as much, if not more, basic training as soldiers of violence. And whereas military soldiers' basic training is in the art of killing, the basic training for satyagrahis or civil resisters was in Constructive Program. Learning how to cooperate with one another, keeping up a steady pressure of work, sometimes doing things or wearing things that you don't particularly like—all these little sacrifices could be a training for the dramatic, obstructive, confrontational dimension of satyagraha.

Another thing or set of things that I would say about Constructive Program, and why it's so important as a scaffold, is what I would call continuity and community. By continuity, I mean if you are protesting something and that's all you're doing, and your protest succeeds or fails—those are the two generally speaking outcomes—whether you succeed or fail, your movement is over.

But if you've engaged yourself in rebuilding your society—as we say here at Metta, building the world you want—that job goes on continuously. You're not waiting for someone to do some kind of atrocity that you're going to react to. So you have continuity in the movement which is so important.

Because we've seen so many times: people come together, they express themselves and it either succeeds or fails, then they go home. Something else happens that they feel compelled to resist, and they have to start all over again without the old databases and so forth.

In addition to continuity through time, you also are forming community with other people. Because you can do a certain amount of Constructive Program yourself. The classic

example was spinning, in India. The spinning wheel, you could do that by yourself up to a certain point. But where are you going to get the cotton from? Whom are you going to sell it to? So eventually Gandhi was able to create a network, a grassroots network that embraced just about all of India, through Constructive Program. We can do that also.

While all this is going on within your community, you're also reassuring the larger community that we sometimes call the "reference public." This can be critical. If you think of movements that have been resistant but have not had a constructive element to them, they can get pretty nasty. The nastiest example that pops into my mind is the *Sendero Luminoso*, the Shining Path guerilla movement in Peru. They proved they could kill and kill and kill, but eventually the Peruvian people got fed up with them, because they killed some of their relatives. Some of the policemen were related to them, and anyhow they were not showing they had any capacity to run the country once they got control of it.

Another thing—this may be in a way the most important, and we've seen this quite recently in quite a few movements. If you have a well-developed Constructive Program, you can pre-empt the biggest danger in an insurrection. That is, when it succeeds, you topple the existing regime, you create a power vacuum, but who's going to rush into that power vacuum? Not the grandmothers. It's going to be people who were dealing with power in the first place, who have some constituency behind them. Maybe they have weapons, maybe they have money.

So over and over, with the Bolshevik uprising in Russia in 1917, how they got swept up with the communists... But if you have built an almost complete, or tolerably complete, regime—before you topple the regime, there's no such danger. You're ready to go. And you're also able to be proactive instead of waiting for some atrocity that happens to galvanize the anxiety and resistance of the public so you can choose your battle—you know, I want to build schools, and at some point the oppressive regime is going to tell me I can't do that.

And that's where we're going to struggle with them, directly, so this way you're choosing your battles and quite importantly, you're taking the moral high ground. Because I can remember when communists were always involved in anti-racism work in this country, and they were the ones who were doing it. And other groups in the U.S. were not doing it, so that gave them a kind of moral high ground. They were doing the work we should have been doing. They were showing up the inadequacy of the regime and the general public by doing that.

I think there's a lot more that can be said about Constructive Program, but I think that would probably be enough for building the general scaffold, and we'll go on from there. Thanks.

Principle 2:

By empowering the positive force of nonviolence, constructive work balances the “noncooperation with evil” with “cooperation with good,” creating an unstoppable force.

Michael: Anyone who’s dealt with nonviolence has encountered what I sometimes call “the mother of all misconceptions.” It’s partly built into the word itself: non-*dash*-violence, the idea that nonviolence is the absence of something else, whereas in reality, it’s violence that’s the absence of something else. It’s the absence of the creative force for good or love that is in the human soul and is the bottom of all reality, according to Gandhi.

So, for example, in Gandhi’s theory of history, which he lays out in *Hind Swaraj*, which we wrote in 1909, he says that history is a record of the interruption of the natural progress of soul force. We wait until there’s a breakdown in society, and we record the details about that breakdown, but we never—we don’t have newspapers that say, you know, a million families lived in peace with one another today. Not very newsworthy, and not very history-worthy either.

So, when you undertake Constructive Program, you’re doing what we sometimes call propaganda of the deed, that term from George Lakey. You are acting out a deeply held belief among visionary nonviolent actors, like Mahatma Gandhi, that the positive reality, good, that you’re cooperating with is not only also there, along with the evil that you’re struggling against, but it is even, if I could use a kind of fancy term here from philosophy, it’s ontologically prior—it is the thing that really exists, and all the various forms of evil that we see all around us are really negative transformations of that positive consciousness, that positive energy.

In addition, if you show that you can do both, that you can cooperate with good and not cooperate with evil, it shows that you have a long-term goal in view, and you have not been caught up in animosity against the oppressor. I just can’t emphasize this enough. So many times when we see injustice, we get livid with anger, which as far as that goes, that’s fine, but then we turn that anger against the person doing the injustice, and that’s not so good—then you’re violating the basic principle of nonviolence, which is never to be against a person, never to be against the wellbeing of a human being, but only against their behavior. You know, to hate the sin but not the sinner.

So sometimes I think, or at least right at this very moment I’m thinking, this might be the most important aspect of cooperating with good—the most important aspect of Constructive Program, that you’re showing that you want things to be right, and you believe that they can be set right. And that’s going to protect you from a personal hatred

of the opponent, and enable you to be really nonviolent in the core of your own heart, your own behavior.

Principle 3:

By providing the people with basic needs through their own work, the lie of dependency is proven wrong, and the chains of oppression shattered.

Michael: The lie of dependency –that's a very good expression, because again, it's a kind of propaganda of the deed, only in this case it's a propaganda of the misdeed. Not all violent situations are colonialist, but almost all of them involve an element of forced dependency. You're saying to your victim: you need me, in one way or another. That implies that you, the victim, are not sufficient, and this is a very deeply flawed image of human nature.

One of the most important things we learn about human beings, from Gandhi's experiments, and the new science wisdom tradition, is that ultimately, everything that we need, all the resources of love and wisdom and what have you, are actually inside of ourselves. So you see that when Constructive Program says to an oppressor, "we don't need to you manufacture this basic good, we are sufficient as individuals and as a society, of creating and supplying all these needs ourselves," it's really almost a theological statement you're making, that the world has enough for everyone's need. And remember this is one of the cardinal points of Gandhian economics—there's enough in the world for everyone's need, there's not enough for everyone's greed.

Notice also that we stated this point providing people with basic needs. Not all good, useful humanitarian acts should be considered Constructive Program. I think they're only Constructive Program properly speaking when, directly or indirectly, they attack the pillars that are supporting the oppressive regime. And one of those pillars will inevitably be the dependency of the colonized or victimized population on the oppressor for basic goods.

So if you can say—I 'm constantly thinking of the Indian example here, and British Raj—if you can say to the British, "we don't need your cloth because we can spin it ourselves," that's much more powerful than saying "take your cloth away, you know, we'll figure something out." That's a classic example of how Constructive Program works. Build it yourself and then you can tell the oppressor that you don't need it. And that is only going to have a powerful effect if it's a basic need that you're talking about, and it also shows how Constructive Program will go on to build the scaffolding of a new society—you're not doing that on iPhones and wristwatches and things like that. What you have to have in place are food, clothing, shelter and needs. And you'll notice the

two big campaigns that Gandhi carried on in India, the really dramatic things were about cloth and salt—food and clothing.

So we're reaffirming our independence as people, our ability to enter freely into relationships of interdependence, without dependency, and we're picking on what we like to call around here a keystone issue, something that, if you can gain material success in this area, it will really weaken the hold of the regime.

And you have British officials who actually said "it's by controlling salt that we have a stranglehold on the Indian people." When they made their own salt, they gently pried that hand off their throat and it was a very good example of taking away the pillars of support from an oppressive regime. But doing it in the best way possible—not just knocking the pillars out from under the regime, but building your pillar. Thank you.

Principle 4:

It unifies diversity by creating work in which everyone can participate in. Such work is ongoing, proactive, and builds community.

Michael: Some years ago, Ivan Illich, the well-known social critic, wrote a stunning article called *De-Linking Peace and Development*. And in that article, he basically pointed out that for some reason, oppression and oppressive regimes always drive towards uniformity. They always crush diversity, and reasserting diversity is an important element of winning, regaining your nonviolent freedom, regaining a nonviolent situation, winning your freedom nonviolently.

So, good Constructive Program, again, is not just a question of doing good works that happen to be constructive, but things are really going to rebuild the vitality of a society based on the vitality of individuals within it. So they will try to find a kind of work that awakens the creative capacity of the individual and restores indigenous resources of people or a culture so it's a direct approach to cultural violence in that way.

When one culture says, you know, "your ways and means don't work, you've got to imitate us and do everything our way..." So a good Constructive Program would allow people to discover their individual capacities and contribute into the work of rebuilding the society. And what it's really doing then, ultimately, is returning control to the people themselves.

I want to emphasize that because so often we, in protest movements and movements that arouse a lot of anger, there is quite legitimately a feeling that control has been taken away from us in the form of our votes, or what have you, direct infringements of freedom. So because people are so deeply and quite correctly identified with the work

that they do, allowing people to have constructive work is a powerful way of giving them back their dignity, and their use, their meaning as people.

It always comes to my mind that right after 9/11, here in the U.S., then-President Bush said "take the kids to Disneyland, go shopping, we'll take care of this. You can't defend yourself. You can't build a country that will be strong from within." So this is the lie of oppression and dependency. Constructive Program is a direct, visible way of counteracting that line, substituting the truth of independence and creativity. Gandhi went so far as to say, again in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909, that the British did not take India, we gave her to Britain.

They gave the country up because they were seduced by the glitter of western civilization and cowed by the apparently overwhelming power of British military organization and technology. And so what he was doing 200 years later was giving people back, encouraging people to take back, what they had given away. I think sociologists know that, for example, in situations where groups have been divided against one another and you want to reconcile them, joint entertainment, joint meals, all those things help a little.

But the thing that does it much more powerfully, and much more directly, is working on a project together, because of the deep sense in which we feel that we that we are defined by our work, and our value is defined is by what we can contribute. So you can see what a powerful, restorative mechanism this is for people who've been convinced that they're helpless, and they're no good. They've also been subjected to a kind of uniformity that inevitably follows with oppression, and they're reasserting both their meaning, their value on the one hand, and their appropriate diversity on the other hand.

Principle 5:

Constructive Program trains people to live a nonviolent life. Just as training for violent revolt means the use of military weapons, training for Satyagraha means constructive program.

Michael: Nonviolence is not just something that you can put on and off as the occasion requires. Almost everyone who recognizes that there's a difference between just carrying on to accomplish one particular thing, and having it be really a part of a paradigm shift, is this idea that it has to pervade your life. It has to become something you do every day.

And you certainly can't fight your whole life. But you can build your whole life. So learning to carry on those constructive activities day by day, in between outbreaks of struggle, is a key contribution that Constructive Program is making, not just to the revolution but to you as a human being.

I'd like to fall back here on an Indian theory that there are three energy states called *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*—*tamas* being, roughly speaking, lethargy, darkness, inactivity; *rajas* being aggressive action; and *sattva* being that pure balance of creative energy. In many ways, this informs Gandhi's whole concept of how nonviolence works, what the dynamic is. He said that he can make a satyagrahi, a nonviolent warrior if you will, out of a violent person, but he cannot do that out of a coward because cowardice is associated with paralysis and fear.

So if you're *tamasic*, if you're in a state of lethargy, you're going to be useless for a freedom struggle, rebuilding your society in any other way. So you have to be roused from that lethargy, but the question is how. Are you going to be roused directly into a violent outburst, or are you going to be roused into constructive energy?

Gandhi said that he had learned to conserve his anger and it was the most powerful force in the world. Martin Luther King was asked, "didn't you rouse a lot of outbursts of anger?" He said "we did not rouse outbursts of anger, we expressed anger under discipline for maximum effect." I guess I would have to say that this is pretty much the key to nonviolent struggle. That's where the energy comes from and that's the pathway along which that energy has to travel. And what better training can there possibly be than rousing people out of their lethargy by giving them constructive work to do? It also hangs together with our concept of who we are.

Gandhi went so far as to say that if you don't till the land, you will never know who you are. In other words, if you're not involved in what he called bread labor, which is an important aspect of Constructive Program—it means creating the real basics of life, food, clothing and shelter—then you really don't know who you are. And it's impossible to get to that image where everyone has a contribution to make, because if you create an industrial society which manufactures what people need and treats them as passive consumers, they will never find out who they are. It's that deep a damage to the human spirit. So in a well-run constructive program, you are allowing people to rediscover themselves through constructive work.

E.F. Schumacher, the author of *Small Is Beautiful*, which was quite a revolutionary book when it came out, went on to write another book on good work, and he said that there are three

functions of work: there of course it's supposed to bring in some kind of income so you can live, but you're supposed to be providing people goods and services and rubbing off the angles and corners of your own egotism through constructive interaction with others. So in good Constructive Program you might be involved in tilling your own garden. But where are the seeds going to come from and what are you going to do with the produce? Where are you going to learn how to do gardening? It involves you in creative, constructive work with others, and learning how to work with others is a very good way of overcoming your individual egotism.

Finally, I'm not sure how much we can make of this, but Gandhi actually said that the calm, steady rhythm of the spinning wheel, which you're plying in a sacrificial spirit, is almost the equivalent of meditation. Well, I don't think a spinning wheel is quite the equivalent of meditation, but I know for a lot of people who might be very restless and get involved in destructive activities...

And let's look at this example of what happened in the first Intifada in Palestine. You had Palestinian youth in the West Bank who were involved in drug abuse. The minute the Intifada started and they had something to do, some way of expressing their resistance to Israeli occupation, they stopped taking drugs, practically overnight.

So that shows you how powerful a mechanism that can be for awakening and empowering the individual. And in the end, at the end of the day when all is said and done, if a movement does not awaken and empower individuals, it is not going to have a long-lasting revolutionary effect.

Constructive Program Strategies

Strategy 1:

Be concrete and constructive. Although programs can, and often do have symbolic resonance, ideally they should not be merely symbolic. (Gandhi's spinning wheel was an ideal combination.)

Michael: This is correct. The wheel had very powerful symbolic significance in India. At the same time, you weren't just spinning the wheel, you weren't just looking at a picture of the spinning wheel which the Indian flag has, you were actually creating a physical thing that people needed to bring themselves out of poverty and to break the hold of the British regime.

The trouble with being merely symbolic, which incidentally is a very big misconception and a very big strategic mistake, I think, that people often make... For example, right now there's a march going on in India and people are calling it a Gandhian march. And the issue is quite real. The grievance is very real. But people are just marching from one place to another to do what they call, to show by their effort that they care about this thing. They're not putting any real pressure on the government which is the target of the march in this case. And the trouble is when you do that, you are kind of demonstrating your powerlessness. You're kind of demonstrating that you need to appeal to the other, to the opponent. You're demonstrating that you do not have the capacity to solve the problem yourself.

And another difficulty with symbolism in nonviolence, as anywhere, is that symbols can be misconstrued. I remember during the Cold War there was a big anti-draft feeling and activities in the U.S., and people were going and spilling blood on draft files, rendering them useless. The rendering the useless part was not symbolic; it was real. But they were doing it with blood because that symbolized what the draft operation really was. So their interpretation was "we're showing what you're doing is destructive." But actually, if you look deep into the history of rituals, to sprinkle something with blood was to bless it. In fact, the word *bless* in English comes from a Gothic word, *bloedsian*, which means "to sprinkle blood on."

So you can't always control the interpretation people are going to give to a symbol. But I would come back to my first objection to symbolism, and that is that it is a demonstration of powerlessness, that the only way you're going to solve this problem is appealing to the other person to solve it for you. But what you ideally want to do in nonviolence is to show them that you can solve it yourself. And if you need their

cooperation, you are going to do something so compelling they will be drawn into wanting to cooperate with you. But this cannot often be done by just symbolizing a need. It can only be done by concrete action.

Strategy 2:

Try to find “stealth” issues whose significance will be underestimated by the opposition—until it's too late.

Michael: This may sound a little sneaky, and I'm going to try a little bit more clearly what we mean by a “stealth” issue...

The classic example for me was the salt satyagraha in March of 1930. Gandhi did not conceal the fact that he intended to break the salt laws. In fact, he was famous for advertising this. He wrote a telegram to the Viceroy, even giving him the names of the satyagrahis from the ashram who were setting out with him. He explained exactly what he was going to do, and he said “my hope is to break the salt law.” But what he didn't say was that this will break the stranglehold of the British Raj on India, because, you know, maybe it wouldn't.

But the fact is, what was stealthy about it was that Gandhi understood the dynamic better than the Raj itself did. So the Viceroy of India, I think was Lord Irwin at the time, actually said “I'm not going to lose any sleep over the salt campaign.” He didn't lose any sleep over it, but he lost a whole empire over it. So a stealth issue is not one where you're sneaky, but one where you're using your deeper knowledge of the situation, your better insight into the dynamics of the society to advantage.

And then stealth becomes something that's kind of natural in nonviolence, because after all, the whole point in nonviolence is not to be confrontational, or at least not to be confrontational until the time comes. There has got to be what we call in this field a nonviolent moment. In any really major campaign, where two entrenched parties are in opposition to one another, what you're trying to do is maneuver the other party into a situation where you have, for example, what sometimes is called the dilemma action.

If they let you do it, it makes them look bad. They lose control. If they try to stop you from doing it, it makes them look bad because you're just going about your business doing something perfectly natural the people need, or because they're going to have to use so much violence to stop you that it will really reveal the violent nature of the oppression, whatever it is. It's like a homeopathic treatment—you're teasing out the true violence of the regime you're opposed to.

So, clearly you can destroy yourself, if you do this too early. And more importantly, you can set up a wrong attitude if all you do is confront the regime. What it means is your enemy is the regime, the people in it, whereas your real enemy is injustice, and you're ready to cooperate with the regime wherever they're smart enough to cooperate with you.

So “stealth” is a word that, of course, we've borrowed from military terminology. But it doesn't mean you're sneaking up on people in quite the way it means that in military contexts. It means you are exploiting the advantage of your superior knowledge of the situation to do something that will not rouse an immediate reaction, it will enable you to build strength through your common activity, mutual sacrificing, creating strong bonds and practicing all your nonviolent techniques.

And until the confrontation has to come—when it comes, then you are in a strong position and you've created what we call a nonviolent moment, where the real nature of your nonviolence meets the real nature of their violence. And in those situations, you will always prevail. Maybe not immediately, maybe not without cost, but inevitably, if you can really pitch clear obvious nonviolence against violence, nonviolence will always succeed.

So that's where we don't go out to say "let's do this and it will annoy the hell out of them," but you say "let's do this because it will strengthen our position and they won't notice how significant it is until we're so strong that they won't be able to do anything about it." And again, the salt campaign of 1930 was a perfect example of that, but almost all Constructive Program has potentially at least that characteristic—that it doesn't seem as threatening as obstructive action does. But in reality, you who understand nonviolence and understand the positive nature of reality, you know that you are gaining strength and advancing your position all the time through your constructive program.

Strategy 3:

Most importantly, tackle “keystone” issues that could weaken the whole system if successful; in other words, actions that significantly undermine the oppressive power’s “pillars of support.”

Michael: It’s said that one of the most potent characteristics of Gandhi as a strategist, he was able to discriminate very clearly between negotiable items and principles. And he was able to compromise to an extraordinary degree on the former, to such a degree, in fact, that very often his closest followers thought he was giving away the whole store.

But the power came from the fact that the more he was able to compromise on less significant items, the more powerfully he was able to cling to principles and set up a good relationship between him and the opposition – “I’m not against you, I’m just for these principles.” So you can see a very strong parallel where the choice of issues that someone operating Constructive Program should have in mind.

Partly, of course, it’s just a practical matter—why should you waste your effort and your energy doing things that really won’t get you anywhere? If you want to change a system, you have to break those eggs in order to make that omelet. You have to do things that really matter. Sometimes these are not the ones that are most obvious. In our own situation here in the United States, I often think that if we could change education and get rid of advertising, the battle would be more than half over. We’d be on our way to a new regime, a new paradigm of peace and justice.

So as I say, it’s partly just a matter of saving your energy, because usually resisters don’t have the kinds of resources and capacities that the opposition has because it’s entrenched. But partly it’s a deeper issue than that; it’s being able to discriminate between what isn’t so significant and what is. It relies upon your deeper understanding of the situation and its dynamics.

And in a way, you can see a parallel here between the relative weaknesses we see of actions that are merely symbolic, as opposed to concrete actions that may or may not have a symbolic resonance—and it’s ideal when they do. Because if you just go after something and force a regime to do something that doesn’t really matter—that doesn’t really change the nature of your relationship with them—what you’re doing is just symbolic and that can lead to the understanding or the interpretation that you just don’t like them and you’re trying to oppose them wherever you possibly can. So it’s really important to be able to sit back and choose the point at which you should operate, move against the regime by constructive and then, if necessary, by more obstructive actions.

Very often, in fact, the basic principles of nonviolence will have both this practical, strategic element and a deeper principle that’s involved. And this is one of the characteristics of really deep thinkers like Emmanuel Kant and Mahatma Gandhi—that they did not see any difference between the morally right thing to do, and the most pragmatic, effective thing to do. So for all of those reasons, it’s a good idea not to just reach out at something that you can’t change, but to reach out for something that you can change and will really make a difference. And again, these



are not necessarily obvious. For example, right now in the U.S. I think the move to amend, to change the Constitution so that we can get off the idea forever that a corporation is a person, that would be a key issue, because the key difficulty, the dilemma that we're facing, the oppression it's building is around this idea of dehumanization. So any way that we can stand up and say no, we are human beings, we are not machines, we are not systems, machines and systems are not living persons—it really goes to the core of the oppressive system.

Strategy 4:

Be constructive whenever possible, and resistant when necessary.

Michael: I want to say a little thing about both clauses in that sentence.

Be constructive whenever possible: I would add, it is very rare that you have a situation where constructive action is not possible, because remember, constructive action doesn't depend on the other. That's one of the whole points of Constructive Program, that you have the capacity to do it yourself and there's always something you can do that they can't prevent you from doing.

And then about being resistant when necessary: sometimes, people go into Constructive Program but they don't think ahead to how they're going to push against the inevitable opposition when it comes. And one example of this, for me, is one of the greatest social movements of our time. It's the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, which is like a textbook case of how to do Constructive Program. But there have been many occasions when landowners have attacked the settlers who were doing something that ultimately is perfectly legal. They've come in with police, with paramilitary, and attacked them.

And as far as I know, the settlers had the people who were occupying the land, legally though it doesn't yet technically belong to them—they haven't had a way of defending themselves against those attacks. Now partly if you take this formula as a whole, what you're doing is basically reversing the violent approach to conflict. In a violent approach, you're against the person and you're resisting them for the sake of resisting them. You want them to feel bad. You believe that their suffering is your benefit. This is totally false to a nonviolent person. What you're doing is offering loving opposition to separate them from their bad behavior, so of course, first of all you have to be separated in your mind. You know if a parent says to a child who has just misbehaved, "there you go again," that has a devastating effect, as opposed to "how could YOU do such a thing?!" which has a restorative, reforming effect. So we want to be resistant only when necessary, but it's equally important to be ready to be resistant when it is necessary. Otherwise, you're rioting for a fall.

I can remember a tragic example that set me very much during the Kosovar resistance in the 1990s, in what is now Kosovo. The Serbian regime, which was very oppressive, had besieged a town the city of Drenica, and women from neighboring towns decided they were going to break bread and bring it to the citizens of Drenica and break the



siege. Very constructive thing to do, dealing with basic life force that has revolutionary potential. Right down the line, it was exactly the right thing to do. But they got to the perimeters of Drenica and the Serbian police confronted them. The women stood there for a while and then went back home. They were not prepared to face the brutal attacks that would have come from those police—and who would be? I mean, I'm not blaming them for not wanting to confront that kind of violence. But given that they weren't ready to do it, the absolutely correct thing to do in this situation is not to have gone there in the first place. So I say this not by any kind of criticism, but to illustrate that we have to think our way through. Once we have chosen a constructive act around a basic need, which is going to restore agency and control to ourselves, we must be mentally ready for opposition because at some point, no matter how stealthy we are, the opponent is going to realize what's going on. At that point they're going to try to break us up. And at that point we need to have prepared in advance how to resist.

Strategy 5:

Form a strategic overview that balances constructive and obstructive measures – shifting to one or the other as appropriate.

Michael: Very helpful strategic point here. There were so many occasions when, for one reason or another, opposition—direct confrontation—is inadvisable or impossible.

Famously in Gandhi's case—and I keep relying on his freedom struggle as our paradigm of classic examples—getting toward the end, suddenly WWII broke out. The British declared India to be at war with Germany—that was another issue—but Gandhi had a principle that he felt very strongly about called “non-embarrassment”—that nonviolence is like a conversation. And continuing to push ahead, regardless of what the opponent is doing, is like a conversation where the other person isn't listening. They can't give you your attention. Worse than that, to tackle the opponent when he or she is down shows a) that you're weak and b) that you don't care for their welfare. Whereas it's much more... in other words, that degenerates into a power struggle. When you can pull back from oppositional actions at will, it shows that you have power, and that you are trying to work towards a commonly agreed upon truth with the opponent, not just trying to push them out of the picture.

So, you're going to end up in a good relationship with them—the way that the British have very good relationships with India now, as opposed to the terrific struggle that went on between France and Algeria, where their freedom struggle was carried out violently. But we like to use this model of an ideal, complete campaign; it's like a bird with two wings, one being Constructive Program and the other being what we call obstructive program or Satyagraha or direct action, and latterly we've taken to saying you need a bird with two wings and a brain. In other words, somebody has to decide “now is the time for constructive program, now is the time for obstructive program.” They have to have that sense and they have to have enough relationship with the people who are following them that when they make a determination like that, others will go along with it.

So, okay, back to our examples, 1940, 1941—the war has broken out, Gandhi was dead set on winning independence, and it had to happen soon. He had declared “do or die.” This is now time for Purna Swaraj, complete independence, and we're not stopping until we get it. But suddenly civil disobedience becomes a very inconsiderate thing to do and sets up a different kind of relationship with the Raj. It just makes them someone you want to defeat rather than someone whom you wish to join with you in seeing a higher vision of the truth. So, here's the dilemma—he can't stop, but he can't carry on civil disobedience anymore. So, someone came to him, some young man, and said “what is it really going to take to get the British off our backs now?” And he [Gandhi] said “phenomenal progress in spinning.” And he said, “okay everybody, get on your spinning wheels, do your boycotts, do your village uplift, picket the liquor stores, do new education,” all of that stuff, to build up their strength so that at the end of the war they were able to move very quickly and efficiently into independence.



He had already practiced this, incidentally, in South Africa toward the end of the eight-year satyagraha there. Suddenly there was a strike by the European railroad workers, and it was an ideal opportunity to "kick the guy when he's down." The government was weakened, a lot of his followers were saying, "sock him, sock him, this is the time to do it." And he said, "no, this is not the time to do it." But he didn't also want people to just go back home—lose the continuity, break the community—so he said, "now let's go back and really work on Constructive Program," though that wasn't as developed in 1917, 1916, as it was later on in 1940.

So, if you have the strategic overview and you can move back and forth with some facility between constructive and obstructive approaches, I think the whole is much greater than the sum of those two parts. I think you get a tremendous amount of capacity and power out of having that flexibility. It also shows—and this is one of the most important lessons I think a lot of us have to learn—it shows that you're not stuck on the technique. You're not stuck on the tactic. You're not, for example, shouting out your disapproval because it makes you feel good. Rather, you're choosing actions which will make a difference in the situation. So this one choice of having those two dimensions, those two wings ready, and being ready to shift from one to another, even though you're a large-scale movement—frankly I think when we see that kind of movement again, and we have not really seen it since the freedom struggle in India, though we were partly there with the civil rights movement in America—if we could make that kind of combination happen, personally I don't think anything could stop us from bringing about the kind of revolution that we want. Thank you very much for listening to these.

Satyagraha

When Is Satyagraha Necessary?

Michael: Basically, when one has been working on personal empowerment and one has done some constructive measures to redress grievances and when one has petitioned to an opposing party and not gotten a response, then you need to enter into nonviolent direct action, noncooperation, resistance – sometimes called civil resistance. And when this is done in a nonviolent spirit, it's called, "Satyagraha." Satyagraha literally meaning, "Clinging to truth."

Now, some people use the term Satyagraha for nonviolence generally, but what we mean here is what you have to do to persuade an opponent who has not listened to your objections and, or has started to block your constructive programs or is doing something so harmful and so drastic that you simply have to intervene, possibly without having the luxury of persuading that person.

For example, right now, in July of 2013, in the United States, we're facing this Keystone Pipeline. And that has to be stopped, and there may not be a time enough to stop it through persuasion and policy. So, we need, then, to go to direct noncooperation. And, as I say, if we do that in a nonviolent spirit, we are carrying out Satyagraha.



What Is Satyagraha?

Michael: Yes, well, as I say, it's clinging to truth. But in the way we're using it here, it means "Clinging to truth in conflict." The truth being that we are all one, and there must be a solution to any dilemma which would be beneficial to both parties, though it may not seem that way. For example, you have the British Raj was ruling India. Gandhi believed deeply that it was harmful to the British – probably more harmful to them than it was to the subject Indians.

So, Satyagraha means identifying a cause for which you are prepared to sacrifice and being prepared to enter into a struggle to get redress for those grievances without injuring the wellbeing of the opponent. So, it's carrying out nonviolent principles in a conflictual situation.

What are the guidelines for Satyagraha?

Michael: Well, Gandhi, in the course of his 50 years of carrying Satyagraha out against ultimately the regime of colonialism, came up with quite a few guidelines that you can see in his book, “Satyagraha in South Africa.” To summarize them here, I would say, first of all, it’s an attitude – an attitude that you are dedicated to the wellbeing of your opponent even while you are absolutely, adamantly opposed to something or things that the opponent is doing. It also means an attitude of never resorting to the wrong means. So, for example, you would never humiliate your opponent because humiliation hurts everyone. If you drag down one human being to that extent, you’ve dragged down the whole human race, including yourself.

So, armed by these two basic attitudes – that you’re not against the person, but against the activity, and that you won’t use harmful means, but as Vinoba Bhave says, “Satyagraha is going from gentle to gentler to gentlest in your means, but never giving up on the ultimate result.” There’s a number of laws that we can observe in action here. One of them Gandhi called “The Law of Progression,” and this stated that if you are true to your cause and you stay on course, it doesn’t matter how few you are.

Even one person, he believed, carrying out Satyagraha faithfully with no ill will towards his opponent – and I know how impossible that sounds in practice. In practice, this will be a matter of degree. But, if you’re staying on course, you’re not giving up on your basic points, and you’re not introducing new ones, your movement will get support. It will get the powers that it needs. So, even if you start out just as one person, there will be ten, forty, forty thousand, if that’s what you need. He called that “The Law of Progression,” and he used this image like the river /Ganges/ doesn’t have to go in search of tributaries, right? They flow into it.

Another law that he discovered – and this is kind of intense – he called “The Law of Suffering.” If you need to move the heart of an opponent, and you often do, the most effective way to do that is taking on yourself some of the suffering that is already imbedded in the situation. Never inflicting suffering on the opponent, but taking it on oneself, with the assumption that there is some empathy, there is some rapport on some deep level, even though it doesn’t show up.

So, at one point, for example, the British threatened Gandhi, which was a really bad thing to do. They threatened him and said, “If you don’t stop, there are going to be rivers of blood flowing in this country.” And they thought he would say, “Oh my goodness! We must stop!” But instead, he said, “Let them. But it’s going to be our blood, not yours.”

Then, proportionality and timing are very important. If you don’t do – you don’t go to drastic things like fasting before you’ve even given the person the chance to respond, but you don’t stick with feeble things like protesting after they’ve made it clear that they’re not inclined to respond. So, in my book, “A Search for a Nonviolent Future,” I go into this. I call it “The Escalation Curve.”

Other things to look out for are “No fresh issue.” If you’re starting to mount a Satyagraha campaign, it’ll usually be successful on some level. You can get giddy and then say, “Oh wow! Now is the chance for us to pile on every grievance that we’ve ever had. But,



you know, when you do that, you've changed the relationship with the opponent from a conversation to a power struggle. So, we don't put in a fresh issue just because we've gotten a little bit of traction.

Another thing to watch out for is what Gandhi called, "Nonembarrassment." If your opponent is distracted – the way, in South Africa, his opponents were distracted by a railroad strike, and then, much more dramatically, back in India in 1940, his opponents were distracted by World War II – that was not the time to take advantage of them, when their guard was down, and launch a major campaign against them. He actually stopped Satyagraha at that point because he didn't feel that you can carry on a conversation with a person who is distracted, and he didn't feel that he was weak and needed to take advantage of people. So, those are some of the guidelines, some of the laws, that one can look out for.

Is Satyagraha, "Moving the Heart?"

Stephanie: When you say, "You have to move the heart of your opponent," at times, it sounds a little wishy-washy, emotional, and not very practical – can't move the heart of everybody all the time. So, what do you mean by that?

Michael: Good question! Well, it's not wishy-washy at all, and it's not emotional only. Science has shown in the last 20 or 30 years that we are immensely in tune with one another. And, although we think that we can inflict suffering on another person and not be harmed ourselves, on even the level of our nervous system, that turns out to be totally wrong. When we hurt another person, we're hurting ourselves, and on some level, we're aware of that.

So, a Satyagrahi – that is, a person using Satyagraha – will actually take advantage of that and reflect back to the opponent the suffering that the opponent is imposing on him or herself. And that will awaken an empathetic response. It doesn't always mean that it will happen just the way you want – it'll happen visibly – but it definitely will happen. And this is not usually very effective if you just carry it out by symbols, but if you do something that really involves a certain amount of risk or a certain amount of discomfort – in the final analysis, it may even call upon you to make a drastic sacrifice.

But it's because we now know so much more about human nature than we did in the bad old days of what they called, "The Veneer Theory" where everybody was thought to be separate and material and violent. Human beings are not like that at their core. Human beings are responsive to one another. Human beings are keenly responsive to dignity, so that when you try to inflict indignity on someone and they refuse to accept that indignity – I can think of hundreds of examples in the history of nonviolence – the person is actually relieved that you haven't accepted that indignity.

Now, mind you, your opponent might be so dehumanized that he or she has a hard carapace and you don't get through to their emotions very easily. But then, you certainly don't get through to their emotions if you use violence. So, in the long run, it's far better to take some suffering onto oneself, appeal to that person, and there are hundreds of stories of people who have been suddenly overcome by the significance of what they were doing because the Satyagrahis didn't fight back against them, but they didn't put up with what you were demanding of them.

Stephanie: Sometimes, even taking suffering on in a situation might be refraining from using language that one would really like to use or saying something that would harm another person. So, it's not always taking on ultimate suffering, making the ultimate sacrifice, but suffering happens on a number of levels, and it's about the Satyagrahi exercising restraint in a lot of situations.

Michael: Excellent point! I think we should never overlook the power of that kind of restraint. And many movements that are going on today in the name of nonviolence and civil resistance and whatnot have people chanting very hateful slogans or carrying signs saying, "Death to the dictator!" To that extent, when they're doing that, what they're actually carrying out is what Gandhi would call "Duragraha" or "Clinging to falsehood" and not clinging to truth.



So, yes, that is a potent form of suffering. When someone strikes out at me, my first impulse is to strike back – in deed, in word, in thought. And if I restrain myself, that develops the power that really gives Satyagraha its force. It's why Gandhi said the supreme lesson that he'd learned in his life is to conserve his anger because that anger could be converted then into a power that can move the world.

Stephanie: Absolutely. I would also add that, just in the way that Aung San Suu Kyi had once said, that when you don't have a gun in your hand, you have to be creative about what you're going to do. And I think, in the same way, if you don't have a violent word you can use, you have to be more creative. And when you keep working on that, you realize that the sort of infinite potential of nonviolence, that creative power will open you up to new ways of resolving conflicts that weren't there when before one might have been relying on the old way of doing things.

Michael: Very well said, Stephanie. And that old way of doing things, the kind of quick and dirty way of reaching for the weapon or throwing out a harsh word – maybe on one level even just harboring a hateful or resentful thought – it leads to a dead end. It's very uncreative. It doesn't allow us to grow. And, even though it might get us a little bit of satisfaction in the short term, it is not going to make a better world.

Stephanie: So, we're not recommending that people accept what we're saying – we recommend that people try it. Try it, judge it against your experience, and see how it goes.

Michael: That is very true. Gandhi always said that nonviolence was a science, and in science, you are not developing dogmas – you're just pointing to hypotheses. And in the last analysis, unless we try to carry this out in our own life, it will not be real to us. So, fortunately, it doesn't mean we have to be in a revolution to overthrow a dictator in order to experiment with these principles. Once we know them well enough and once we've been through that personal empowerment so they become kind of second nature, we can carry that out in our relationship with our dog.

How does one train for Satyagraha?

Michael: On various levels, the restraint that you were just talking about is one training, and of course we can do that all that time, at our own pace, with our own issues. Another element is to learn this science – cognitively, the way you’d learn any other science – by studying books about it. And I like to think that our website, mettacenter.org would be useful for that.

And then there are trainings that people have developed and organized that, in this country, go back to the civil rights movement and the work of Rev. James Lawson, where people go through roleplays and imagine themselves in a threatening situation and train themselves to respond creatively by not taking on the role that the oppressor is forcing on us.

So, one can take on those trainings, but I think really the best laboratory in which to develop nonviolent skill is our daily life. And I think if we go about it gently, slowly, systematically – we’ve got our whole life ahead of us. We’re not going to turn into Gandhi overnight, but we can go a little bit in that direction. It’s actually a very rewarding way to live and makes our relationships better. And then, when push comes to shove, and we find ourselves in a situation where we have to enact nonviolent resistance in a major way, we’ll be much better prepared to do that.

Stephanie: I would also add to this some other practical ways of training for Satyagraha. Coming from Gandhi, he would always be prepared to go to prison. So, in Satyagraha, you have the expectation that, when you act, people might react against you, and you might have to submit to the laws of the place where you’re at. So, you might get arrested.

How do you prepare for going to prison? Well, you start living more simply, and you are training yourself on a regular basis to do without things that otherwise would be luxury items. Same thing with you can train your senses, in a way, “Can I eat what I would be served in prison? Can I sleep in a way that would be uncomfortable to me?” Because the more that we’re living a lifestyle of luxury, the less likely we’re going to be to want to give those things up when the time comes to ask for it.

Michael: Not to mention the fact that those luxuries of ours are hurting other people somewhere in the world – that’s inevitably the case. So, by going to a simpler lifestyle, we’re actually carrying out a kind of constructive program and preparing ourselves psychologically for a Satyagraha struggle. That’s a very good point.

But, you know, you brought something else up, Stephanie, and that is that, when you have succeeded at something through satyagraha, the temptation is to triumphalize. Like, if you’re watching a football match, you see what people do when they score a touchdown – they jump up and down, pump their fists in the air, pour champagne over one another. All of that stuff alienates the opponent, makes him or her more resentful, and gets you thinking that you don’t have to do anything anymore, that you’ve won.



So, Martin Luther King was very careful about not letting his people triumphalize over others. You triumphalize together that we have solved this thing, we've become more human together, but not, "Haha! I beat you!"

How do I evaluate its effectiveness?

Stephanie: So, you've trained for Satyagraha, you've learned your guidelines for how to carry it out – how to offer Satyagraha – and then, it doesn't work. Why didn't it work?

Michael: It didn't work, inevitably, because, in some way or another, you didn't carry it out quite correctly. And it, this is, can be fiendishly difficult for a human to do that. But, in another sense, I would object that, in fact, it did work because it worked on the situation, it worked on the relationships. It made people less alienated against one another. So, even a little bit of Satyagraha will work in the sense that it will make things better – it'll give us a slightly better planet to live in.

Now, often, if you look at the history of Satyagraha, apparent failures were tremendous successes. The classic example of this was the climax of the freedom struggle in India that took place in the spring of 1930. It took the form of the Salt Satyagraha, where Gandhi collected hundreds of thousands of people around him. Incidentally, this is a good example of the law of progression. He started out from his Ashram with seventy people. When he got to the beach to make the salt, twelve days later, they were seventy thousand. So, he got all of these people to break, to disobey the salt laws, and, in a sense, it didn't quote, "work," unquote because the salt laws were barely modified. However, everybody knew that the British Raj was over, that they could not control India anymore. And there's this marvelous thing that Arnold Toynbee, the English historian, said, "He made it impossible for us to go on ruling India, but he made it possible for us to leave without rancor and without humiliation."

So, time and again, in Satyagraha, you carry it out to the best of your ability, you don't get what you want, even though it was a just cause. And that's a critical juncture because, if you don't have enough faith in this thing, not based on enough of your own experience, you then say, "Well, see? Nonviolence doesn't work," and you go back to violence, which, as historian Theodore Roszak points out, hasn't worked for centuries. So, if you have enough deep faith in the principle of Satyagraha and in what it says about human nature, even when you don't see an immediate success, you will know in your heart that you've done the right thing, and that the right thing must have some beneficial impact on the world that you're living in.

So, we've developed this formula at the Metta Center that violence sometimes "works," but it never works – that is, it sometimes gets you what you want, but it always makes things worse – whereas, nonviolence also sometimes "works," but it always works – that is, it always makes things better. And, as the Dalai Lama said, "If you lose, don't lose the lesson." You can always learn from your mistakes and carry it out a little bit more clearly the next time.

Stephanie: That's beautiful, Michael. I was going to add that last part, but you went ahead and said it. But I want to ask you a question now of whether, if Satyagraha didn't work – I remember Gandhi said, you know, "What will" – somebody asked him, "What will get the British out of here?" And he said, "Not Satyagraha." – go back to Series 2 on Constructive Program – he said, "Phenomenal progress in spinning," meaning Constructive Program is what makes this work. And so, do you think that if a



Satyagraha didn't succeed, it might be because of the lack of understanding around the power of Constructive Program?

Michael: That could very well be one of the problems. There are other possibilities, of course. You could be up against a really ruthless opponent, who is so dehumanized in his mind that he doesn't respond easily to your humility and your self-suffering and your determinedness. Or it could be that you've just misjudged something about the situation, and you need to analyze it more carefully. And it could be, because we're all flawed human beings here, you didn't carry it out deeply enough – like maybe you were full of resentment in your heart, which is very hard to avoid in some of these horrible situations that we have in the world today.

So, if it doesn't seem to have worked, it often could be – let's put it this way, at the very least, it's never the case that people can block you from doing Constructive Program. There could be times when Satyagraha in the sense of active resistance is not available – it won't work for one reason or another. But it's almost always possible to go back and strengthen yourself and keep your community more bonded together and keep a sense of shared purpose alive in your heart and mind by going back to Constructive Program.

Stephanie: Thank you. So, say that I'm getting ready to engage in Satyagraha, and I'm doing so because the threat is immense – it's ready to come at me at any moment. Someone's going to kick me off of my land, right, and me and hundreds of other people. So, we're going to offer Satyagraha. However, we haven't developed a constructive program. Do you think that Satyagraha in this way is somehow a less potent form of Satyagraha?

Michael: Very good question. I think what Satyagraha can do in a situation like that is to give you the space for a long-term change. Satyagraha, in itself, cannot give you a long-term change. We've seen this so repeatedly of late, with Arab Spring. I mean, you think of Egypt – they can out this terrific campaign using all the new technologies and so forth. They dislodged a dictator who had been there for three decades, but then what?

So, we should be aware that Satyagraha can be used in emergencies, but A. It's going to be costly, and B. It's still going to leave you with the work of creating the society that you want and protecting the fragile freedoms that you just gained. So, yeah. All those have to be taken into account. Satyagraha can be used in an emergency. It can stop the worst of the damage. But that doesn't mean you then go home and rest on your laurels – it then means we've now opened up a space for reconciliation and carrying forward with a constructive, creative world.

How do I evaluate its effectiveness?

Stephanie: So, you've trained for Satyagraha, you've learned your guidelines for how to carry it out – how to offer Satyagraha – and then, it doesn't work. Why didn't it work?

Michael: It didn't work, inevitably, because, in some way or another, you didn't carry it out quite correctly. And it, this is, can be fiendishly difficult for a human to do that. But, in another sense, I would object that, in fact, it did work because it worked on the situation, it worked on the relationships. It made people less alienated against one another. So, even a little bit of Satyagraha will work in the sense that it will make things better – it'll give us a slightly better planet to live in.

Now, often, if you look at the history of Satyagraha, apparent failures were tremendous successes. The classic example of this was the climax of the freedom struggle in India that took place in the spring of 1930. It took the form of the Salt Satyagraha, where Gandhi collected hundreds of thousands of people around him. Incidentally, this is a good example of the law of progression. He started out from his Ashram with seventy people. When he got to the beach to make the salt, twelve days later, they were seventy thousand. So, he got all of these people to break, to disobey the salt laws, and, in a sense, it didn't quote, "work," unquote because the salt laws were barely modified. However, everybody knew that the British Raj was over, that they could not control India anymore. And there's this marvelous thing that Arnold Toynbee, the English historian, said, "He made it impossible for us to go on ruling India, but he made it possible for us to leave without rancor and without humiliation."

So, time and again, in Satyagraha, you carry it out to the best of your ability, you don't get what you want, even though it was a just cause. And that's a critical juncture because, if you don't have enough faith in this thing, not based on enough of your own experience, you then say, "Well, see? Nonviolence doesn't work," and you go back to violence, which, as historian Theodore Roszak points out, hasn't worked for centuries. So, if you have enough deep faith in the principle of Satyagraha and in what it says about human nature, even when you don't see an immediate success, you will know in your heart that you've done the right thing, and that the right thing must have some beneficial impact on the world that you're living in.

So, we've developed this formula at the Metta Center that violence sometimes "works," but it never works – that is, it sometimes gets you what you want, but it always makes things worse – whereas, nonviolence also sometimes "works," but it always works – that is, it always makes things better. And, as the Dalai Lama said, "If you lose, don't lose the lesson." You can always learn from your mistakes and carry it out a little bit more clearly the next time.

Stephanie: That's beautiful, Michael. I was going to add that last part, but you went ahead and said it. But I want to ask you a question now of whether, if Satyagraha didn't work – I remember Gandhi said, you know, "What will" – somebody asked him, "What will get the British out of here?" And he said, "Not Satyagraha." – go back to Series 2 on Constructive Program – he said, "Phenomenal progress in spinning," meaning Constructive Program is what makes this work. And so, do you think that if a

Satyagraha didn't succeed, it might be because of the lack of understanding around the power of Constructive Program?

Michael: That could very well be one of the problems. There are other possibilities, of course. You could be up against a really ruthless opponent, who is so dehumanized in his mind that he doesn't respond easily to your humility and your self-suffering and your determinedness. Or it could be that you've just misjudged something about the situation, and you need to analyze it more carefully. And it could be, because we're all flawed human beings here, you didn't carry it out deeply enough – like maybe you were full of resentment in your heart, which is very hard to avoid in some of these horrible situations that we have in the world today.

So, if it doesn't seem to have worked, it often could be – let's put it this way, at the very least, it's never the case that people can block you from doing Constructive Program. There could be times when Satyagraha in the sense of active resistance is not available – it won't work for one reason or another. But it's almost always possible to go back and strengthen yourself and keep your community more bonded together and keep a sense of shared purpose alive in your heart and mind by going back to Constructive Program.

Stephanie: Thank you. So, say that I'm getting ready to engage in Satyagraha, and I'm doing so because the threat is immense – it's ready to come at me at any moment. Someone's going to kick me off of my land, right, and me and hundreds of other people. So, we're going to offer Satyagraha. However, we haven't developed a constructive program. Do you think that Satyagraha in this way is somehow a less potent form of Satyagraha?

Michael: Very good question. I think what Satyagraha can do in a situation like that is to give you the space for a long-term change. Satyagraha, in itself, cannot give you a long-term change. We've seen this so repeatedly of late, with Arab Spring. I mean, you think of Egypt – they can out this terrific campaign using all the new technologies and so forth. They dislodged a dictator who had been there for three decades, but then what?

So, we should be aware that Satyagraha can be used in emergencies, but A. It's going to be costly, and B. It's still going to leave you with the work of creating the society that you want and protecting the fragile freedoms that you just gained. So, yeah. All those have to be taken into account. Satyagraha can be used in an emergency. It can stop the worst of the damage. But that doesn't mean you then go home and rest on your laurels – it then means we've now opened up a space for reconciliation and carrying forward with a constructive, creative world.

What Comes Next?

Stephanie: Michael, we've gone through Person Power, Constructive Program, and now we're working on Satyagraha. So, we've moved through these three levels, now what do we do? Is Satyagraha enough? Is everything going to be fixed after we offer Satyagraha? What comes next?

Michael: Well, if you properly understand Satyagraha, I think, as a very deep change that comes from a different vision of the human being, even if you have a Satyagraha campaign and it rectifies one injustice or another, that will not have been the whole story. The ultimate aim of Satyagraha is to reunite people. Remember Gandhi making the discovery that the purpose of his profession – he was a lawyer – the purpose of his profession was to unite people who have been riven asunder. So, Satyagraha is the way that we can correct injustices and end up all being closer.

Kenneth Boulding once defined nonviolence as “Integrative Power. You can get things done by Threat Power. You can get things done by Economic Power, by buying what you want. But, ultimately, the way to get things done and to reunify this broken life of ours is through Satyagraha or nonviolence. So, I would highly recommend Satyagraha for every one of us and to look at all three of these steps in taking Satyagraha, or using Satyagraha, to get us to a much brighter world. Thank you very much.

Stephanie: And if anybody's interested in learning more about Satyagraha, my recommendation is that you go directly to Gandhi's writings. There is a book called, “Satyagraha, Non-violent Resistance,” which is a compilation that somebody else put together of all of his writings on the topic, sectioned off into, you know, “How to train for Satyagraha” to “It's philosophical basis” to “Satyagraha in politics,” so forth. You can read, “The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi,” which also does this – has something called “The Gospel of Satyagraha” in it. Any of his writings, you're going to hear Gandhi talking about, “What is Satyagraha?”

And more contemporary writings on Satyagraha would include Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan's book on “Why Civil Resistance Works,” which is about dislodging dictators and transitions to democracy. Michael, do you have any other suggestions for reading that people might learn more about this power of Satyagraha?

Michael: You've kind of put me on the spot with that question, Stephanie, because I'd love to recommend my own book, “The Search for a Nonviolent Future,” but in it and on our website you'll also find many other resources. I don't think that Satyagraha requires a lot of reading, but I think it definitely requires some.

We're so unfamiliar with this worldview that we have to expose ourselves to some of the people who've experimented with this and thought it through. Martin Luther King's “Strive Toward Freedom” is also very good. Gene Sharp's “Politics of Nonviolent Action” – though it includes some things that I think would make a real Satyagrahi a bit uncomfortable, like humiliating the opponent – it gives you a wealth, a sense of the wealth of ways that Satyagraha can be practiced.



But we should bear in mind that it's useful in almost every human situation, not just in the dislodging of a dictatorship. If you want to put it that way, there's a little dictator inside every one of us, known as the ego. And the ultimate Satyagraha is going to enable us to dislodge that.

Stephanie: On that sublime note, I would just add Joan Bondurant's "Conquest of Violence," where she goes into several of Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns and deconstructs them bit by bit to show, you know, "What was he doing with the media?" "What kind of tactics did he use?" "Was it successful?" "How was it judged successful?" so forth. Thank you.