

1. Nonviolence is passive and cowardly.

It is courageous to confront others who are willing to physically harm you, while you are committed to not harming them. When you stand up for justice, you might be risking harm and it takes courage and training to not respond in kind. As we wrote in Session 3, nonviolence is assertive; nonviolent actors stand up against injustice and try to make change using methods that do not physically harm other people. There is nothing passive about this kind of nonviolent action. Dr. King said, “Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.”

2. Violence is more effective than nonviolence.

When used wisely and strategically, nonviolent methods have often proven to be more effective than violence in achieving the objectives of a movement. People that say nonviolent action doesn't work probably lack information about the history of nonviolent action, or are equating the whole of nonviolent action with symbolic protests and petitions (not taking into account methods of non-cooperation and intervention). Empirical studies have now demonstrated that nonviolent action is twice as effective as violence in repelling foreign invasions, ending occupations, and changing a government or regime. (For more information on this, read Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.)

3. Nonviolence does not work against totalitarian regimes.

Struggles against totalitarian regimes often involve relatively high casualty rates, violent repression, and require different strategies than nonviolent struggles in more tolerant situations, but nonviolent action is still successful even in these situations. (See also *Why Civil Resistance Works*, by Chenoweth and Stephan.) Keep in mind that nonviolent action does not *always* work, but then again, violent means do not always work either.

4. Nonviolent movements need to have a violent flank in order to succeed.

Violent flanks in predominantly nonviolent struggles lower the likelihood of success, because it shifts the campaign to a battlefield on which the state (or sometimes companies) has much more competence and far more resources. It is sometimes argued that violence can bring more attention to the campaign, but often the violence makes the movement less legitimate and therefore loses support from the citizens that aren't involved directly. You could say that using nonviolent methods gives the movement a moral advantage in the struggle, by which it increases its influence.

5. Nonviolence is more dangerous than violence.

The statistical likelihood of being killed in a nonviolent conflict is much lower than in a violent conflict for both participants and bystanders. In a violent conflict, the only option is for the two sides to shoot or attack each other, which makes the likelihood of being harmed in such situations much greater. At the very least, there is no such thing as “being killed by friendly fire” from participants in a nonviolent struggle. Bystanders may be harmed by the

violent repression used by the movement's opposition, but the nonviolent movement itself does not wield weapons, tear gas, rubber bullets, guns, etc., and cannot, therefore, harm bystanders. Moreover, there are nonviolent acts of resistance that avoid and decrease the chance of being physically harmed. Nonviolent action is a unique approach that minimizes the effectiveness of violence by actively challenging it. It can also make the use of violence backfire on the opposition (see statement 4).

6. Violent movements achieve their goals within a shorter time than nonviolent movements.

Empirical studies have shown that violent struggles are not shorter in duration than nonviolent struggles, particularly if achieving stated objectives is included in the analysis. In a few cases, nonviolent struggles have succeeded in as little as a few days. Chenoweth and Stephan offer the following information: For nonviolent anti-government campaigns, the average duration is 16 months. For nonviolent territorial (expelling a foreign invasion or ending an occupation) campaigns, it's 4.25 years. The average overall duration for nonviolent conflicts is about 2 years.

This compares with over 6 years for violent anti-government campaigns and about 8 years for violent territorial campaigns (average overall for violent campaigns is about 7 years). Nonviolent struggles are thus more than *three times faster* than violent conflicts for similar goals on average.

Note: The above figures measure from the start to finish of contentious activity involving at least 1,000 participants and excludes the planning stages of either violent or nonviolent conflict.

7. A nonviolent struggle does not attract the world's attention.

It is reasoned that by using violence the media will pay attention to the injustice that is being done. The media does pay attention to these events, but unfortunately, such events are often used to justify the actions of the oppressor. Especially in Western countries, one sees a rhetoric of defending one's country and protecting the country against terrorism. Lately, we see more often that nonviolent protests also get attention, such as the Egyptian uprising of 2011. There are examples of public support increasing when nonviolent methods encounter violent oppression, such as during the US civil rights movement when dogs were released on a crowd of nonviolent demonstrators. Another example is the Gandhian activists who were clubbed down by the police in 1930 at the salt works and kept stepping forward to be beaten by the police; this event dramatically increased the support of the movement. The image of the police hurting defenseless protesters shocked the whole world.

8. Not everyone can use nonviolent methods; it is for the educated or saints.

History shows that nonviolent struggles have been primarily waged by ordinary people like you, me, and the family down the street. Many faith-based groups have been involved in organizing nonviolent struggles, but the majority of the participants in historical struggles are not saints or monks. It is important to keep in mind that change has often been created by regular people