

Steps in a Nonviolent Campaign

1) **Investigate.** Get the facts. Clear up any possible misunderstanding right at the start. If an injustice clearly has been done, be equally certain exactly who or what is to blame for it. The complexity of society today requires patient investigation to accurately determine responsibility for a particular injustice. The ability to explain facts rather than just relying on rhetoric will win support and prevent misunderstandings.

2) **Negotiate.** Meet with opponents and put the case to them. A solution may be worked out at this point. It is possible that your opponents have a grievance which you didn't know about. Now is the time to find out. If no solution is possible, let your opponents know that you intend to stand firm to establish justice. Let them know, however, that you are always ready to negotiate further.

3) **Educate.** Keep campaign participants and supporters well-informed about the issues, and spread the word to the public. This may involve issuing simple but carefully prepared leaflets. It may also call for street theater, informal street speaking, door-to-door personal visits, phone calls and press releases. Talk to the editors of local newspapers and to government officials. Always stick to the facts, avoid exaggeration, be brief and show good will. Remember that the attitudes of local people about your campaign can have an important effect on its outcome.

4) **Demonstrate.** Picketing, vigiling, mass rallies, and leafletting are the next steps. All of these make more impact on your opponent, the public, the press, and law enforcement officials, if conducted in a well organized manner. Those who are demonstrating should be well informed, cool headed, able to endure heckling and to withstand possible violence without panic and without resorting to violence in return. It is most important to maintain discipline at this stage, and to "keep cool under fire".

5) **Resist.** Nonviolent resistance is the final step, to be added to the first four as a last resort. This may mean a boycott, a fast, a strike, tax resistance, a nonviolent blockade or other forms of civil disobedience. Planning must be carefully done, and nonviolence training is essential. Discipline must be firm to avoid making your resistance vulnerable to violent provocation. Every provocation must be answered calmly and without retaliation. The general public as well as the direct action participants themselves can be moved more favorably by a well organized, orderly expression of resistance. A crucial part of nonviolent resistance is the willingness to suffer the consequences. You are saying, in effect: "I am so determined to right this injustice that I am willing to suffer to bring about change," instead of the more common and less effective reasoning: "I am so determined to right this injustice that I'm going to make my opponent suffer for it." The willingness to accept and absorb violence and suffering can often be the cutting edge for change. When properly carried out, actions of resistance build a position of moral clarity which will strengthen your own courage and create widespread respect for your campaign.

6) **Be patient.** Meaningful change can not be accomplished overnight. Like the building of a cathedral, it requires years of work. To deepen one's analysis of injustice and oppression means to become aware of how deeply entrenched are the structures which produce them. These structures can be eliminated, but this requires a long-term commitment and strategy. Individual actions are much more effective if they are integrated in a nonviolent campaign which may have to continue not only for months but for years. Along the way, there will be many experiences of failure and temptations to give up. No action should be perceived as a "do-or-die" situation for your campaign.

These principles were first developed in the context of the struggle for civil rights in the U.S. for which it was written and published by the American FOR at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King. The present version has been slightly revised for international use by the International FOR, which is a transnational and interreligious movement committed to nonviolence as a principle of life and liberation.

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