

Workshop: Intro to Nonviolent Conflict

Goal: Build awareness of and interest in civil resistance

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Define civil resistance
- List different methods of nonviolent action
- Cite examples of nonviolent movements in history
- Construct definitions of power, conflict, and resistance
- Share their perspectives on foundational ideas on nonviolent conflict

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart, markers

Process:

1. **Introductions** (15 minutes) – Who are we, what is ICNC, and what do we do? Why are you interested in peace and social justice? What actions have you taken or attitudes adopted to help advance issues of peace and social justice? Participants write their names and responses on a piece of paper, crumple it up, and then toss it into a can, hat, or bucket. Different pieces of paper are then pulled out at random by the participants, opened up and read to them selves. A handful of students who find the one they picked to be particularly interesting are asked to share it with the rest of the group.
2. **Think-Pair-Share** (5 minutes) – Facilitators list three key themes that are integral to understanding nonviolent conflict and civil resistance (power, conflict, resistance). Participants are asked to pair up with the person next to them. One section of the room is asked to come up with a definition of power with their partner and give an example or two of power being exercised. Another section of the room is asked to come up with a definition of conflict with their partners and give one or two examples of a conflict. And the last section of the room is asked to come up with a definition of resistance with their partner and give one or two examples of resistance in history.
3. **Harvesting** (10 minutes) – Facilitators call on some of the pairs to share their definitions (or the main ideas, concepts, or words embedded in it) and some of their examples. The facilitator writes these key ideas down on flip chart.
4. **Presentation** (5 minutes) – facilitators unveil a definition of civil resistance, connecting it to the insights and examples that students have generated in their pairs.

5. **Agree/Disagree** (15 minutes) – facilitators read a couple quotes regarding power, resistance, and conflict and students raise a fist if they agree with the quote or a palm if they disagree with the quote. Facilitators choose students at random to explain why they agree or disagree.
6. **Conclusion** (10 minutes) – Why is it important to learn about civil resistance? What are other resources students can access to learn more?

Definition: Civil resistance is a way for people who are living under an intolerable, oppressive, or unjust system to wield power by using nonviolent tactics such as strikes, boycotts, and mass demonstrations that increase the cost to their adversary of maintaining the status quo. This in turn forces the forces the system to change or collapse all together, ideally creating a more just, equitable, and free society.

People have used civil resistance in India to resist British rule; in South Africa to bring an end to Apartheid; in the United States to advance women's rights and civil rights; in Chile, Serbia, and the Philippines to remove dictators from power; etc.

Quotes:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand."

- Frederick Douglass

"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

- Mao Zedong

"Violence can destroy power but it cannot create power."

- Hannah Arendt

"If the means are just, the ends will take care of themselves."

- Mohandas Gandhi

"People are dependent upon the goodwill, the decisions and the support of their government or of any other hierarchical system to which they belong."

- Gene Sharp (outlining a monolithic view of power)

"Repression cannot be abolished except in a hail of bullets."

- Osama bin Laden

"Violence is the last refuge of the weak."

- Jorge Luis Borges