

BREAKTHROUGH:
AN UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE ALBERT EINSTEIN INSTITUTION
December 2011

For decades, our Senior Scholar, Gene Sharp, has predicted that our work focusing on nonviolent alternatives to both violence and passivity was on the verge of a breakthrough. Gene foresaw that recognition for this work would reach a level at which the analysis would largely be accepted as valid, and the various misconceptions widely associated with it would disappear. At that point, consideration of nonviolent means of struggle would finally be regarded as meriting attention and exploration.

It appears that the breakthrough Gene anticipated has now happened.

The blockage to understanding the power of nonviolent struggle has now widely been broken. To a large degree, this has been made possible by the events of this year: the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and the struggles in Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and elsewhere, as well as the Occupy movement, and its various counterparts in cities around the world. These developments hold significant consequences for the planet we share.

The Albert Einstein Institution, since 1983, has been working to increase knowledge of nonviolent action, exploring its potential, and learning how people can skillfully apply it in situations of great need for effective struggle, while avoiding the dangers of violence. Our work over decades is having a major impact because of its quality and our persistence, despite an often skeptical “audience”. Since our founding, we have made significant inroads in furthering that mission by producing extremely high-quality analyses that can guide groups in their exploration of these means. Our focus, writings, and the careful guidelines we have developed for responding to appeals for assistance have served well the exploration of nonviolent alternatives.

Due to the high quality and great variety of the analyses, as well as the important efforts of a number of people, we have observed an incremental spread in the ideas conveyed by Gene’s writings over the years. Recent events, however, have brought massive new attention to the power of these ideas and their potential for bringing about important changes in the world.

In addition to the events you have witnessed on your television screens, the web, and in the news, we have much to report. The past year has been extremely eventful and productive, with a number of new developments in the areas of publicity, translations, new publications, and new areas of dissemination of our work.

PUBLICITY AND NEW AWARENESS

The events of this year have contributed to unprecedented media interest from newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations from Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, North America, and elsewhere. That attention to our work was strong—during a period of five weeks, we spoke to an average of five journalists a day. People all over the world wanted to know, “Who is Gene Sharp, and why have we never heard of him or these important ideas before now?”

It is remarkable that these interviewers, almost without exception, came already well informed. They had none of the long-standing preconceptions and distortions that were almost universal in past years. It is also remarkable that the editors who assigned these journalists this task obviously saw that their readers/viewers were hungry for understanding and knowledge about the demonstrations of the power of nonviolent struggle to undermine repressive regimes that we witnessed this year, and that continue.

“WHY NOT US?”

From extremely diverse individuals and groups we have heard a surprisingly similar sentiment when they learn of the existence of this research and analysis: “Why not us?” In other words, diverse individuals and groups are asking how this work, whose power has been so clearly demonstrated, can be applied to address the problems they face. We have received inquiries on the relevance of these powerful ideas and important material to address the problems of foreign occupations and invasions, climate change, economic injustice, corporate exploitation, and how to expand freedoms of all kinds.

Visits to our website have increased exponentially and come from all but four countries in the world. We have received requests for information about nonviolent struggle from individuals or organizations concerning Ivory Coast, Egypt, Croatia, Spain, Canada, Russia, India, China, Iran, the Palestinian Territories, Afghanistan, Gabon, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Pakistan, Italy, Turkey, Azerbaijan, the United States, Algeria, the Philippines, Syria, Libya, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Cuba, and Poland, among others.

DEMAND FOR OUR WRITINGS

Sales of our literature have also increased and we can hardly fill orders as they are received. This illustrates that people are recognizing that careful study is a necessary prerequisite to effective action. When the California public radio station, KPFK briefly offered a free copy of Gene’s *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, with every pledge during their funding drive, the response was so overwhelming that, in one week, it depleted a five years’ supply of the book, based on its past sales figures.

Within a few days, downloads of our online material numbered in the thousands, with many thousands of downloads since then. Our email system and website became so overloaded with inquiries, that we were forced to switch to a newer, larger server.

HONORS/SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Honors for Gene this year include the El-Hibri Peace Education Prize in September and Foreign Policy Magazine’s Top 100 Global Thinkers Award earlier this month. Gene travelled to Washington, D.C. to receive both awards.

Also, just last week, Gene was awarded Manchester College’s Innovator of the Year award. A delegation of professors and a student travelled to our office to present the award and film an interview with Gene that will be shown to students and disseminated online.

Gene and Jamila have been invited to speak and participate in numerous events, conferences, classes, and meetings this year as close-by as Harvard and downtown Boston

and as far away as Brazil and the United Kingdom. These have included talks by Gene at the Google Zeitgeist event, and the Fletcher Summer Institute for the Advanced Study of Nonviolent Action. Also this year, Jamila presented at the annual congress of the Cuban-American National Foundation, The Back2Black Festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at TEDx San Francisco, at the New Hampshire Political Women's Caucus, the Muslim Film Festival, and at Brandeis University. She has participated in discussions following film screenings of "How to Start a Revolution" at film festivals in a number of cities and towns in the United States and Canada.

NEW WRITINGS AND TRANSLATIONS

As has been reported, *Sharp's Dictionary of Power and Struggle* was published in November by Oxford University Press. It contains entries for 993 terms and definitions for 824 terms. The text includes an introduction that explains the unique approach of this volume, as well as three important additions: One is an essay on power titled "Power and Realism" that turns "traditional thinking on power on its head". The second and third are two case studies: "Serbia 1996-2000" by Joshua Paulson and "The Tunisian Uprising and Protests December 2010-January 2011" by Jamila.

A grant from the Arca Foundation in Washington, D.C. provided important funding to assist in the completion of this book, which has been decades in the making.

Our publication *Self-Liberation: A Guide to Strategic Planning for Action to End a Dictatorship or Other Oppression* has been receiving significant attention. The text of the booklet, along with 900 pages of reading, is now available in Mandarin and is being translated into Farsi, Vietnamese, and Arabic.

We've received dozens of requests from individuals and groups seeking to translate and/or publish Gene's writings in a variety of languages and countries. These include fifteen new translations of *From Dictatorship to Democracy* alone, including Catalan, Urdu, Swahili, Turkish, Greek, and Korean. A new Italian edition of this important book has been published by Chiarelettere Publishers, and printed copies of a new UK edition will be available soon through Profile Books.

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTARY

This fall, the Gene Sharp documentary *How to Start a Revolution* (www.howtostartarevolution.com) had its world premiere in Boston at the Boston Film Festival. Gene, along with Jamila and Robert Helvey and director Ruairidh Arrow took part in a Q&A following the premiere. The film received a very positive response from the audience, with no less than three standing ovations. Following the film, we hosted a small reception with friends and supporters.

The 86-minute documentary is an overview of the development of Gene's work and writings, and traces its impact among resistance movements around the world. It features interviews with individuals connected with Gene's work, including Jamila, Robert Helvey, Srdja Popovic, Ahmed Maher (Founder of the April 6 Movement in Egypt), Syrian activist Ausama Monajed, and others.

The film has since been shown at film festivals in San Francisco, Vermont, Portsmouth, N.H., Palo Alto, Calif., London, Ottawa, Fort Lauderdale, and Florence, Italy, and at Occupy camps in Boston, London, Toronto, and Montana. It has been shown on network television channels in Australia, Israel, and here in the United States on Current Television.

We have been very pleased by the strong positive reaction from film critics and audiences everywhere it has been shown. The film has received numerous awards, including Best Documentary at the Boston Film Festival, Ottawa Film Festival, and Raindance Film Festival (London). The distribution company responsible for handling educational screenings and network distribution reports very strong interest. The film is expected to be released on DVD by March 2012.

On the evening of January 1, 2012, the American television network, Current TV will be airing the full US television premiere of *How to Start a Revolution* in the United States and the United Kingdom. For information on the time it will be airing, or to find the Current TV station in your area, please visit them on the web at <http://current.com/schedule/>.

We are pleased that this important film is now available to a wider audience, and hope that you all get a chance to watch it.

NEED FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION

This is an incredibly exciting time for us. We are affirmed in the importance of our mission and the quality of our past work. However, it is critical that we examine the changes taking place in the world, our own contribution to them, the impact of these transformations on our work going forward, and how we can best meet the challenges and opportunities before us. We have explored possible courses of action and developed specific plans to guide us in strengthening our ability to preserve and expand this work so that those who rely on us can receive the information and assistance they require, and which can greatly impact their exploration of these ideas, and their potential adoption of them in order to more effectively achieve freer and just societies.

The need and demand for the work has only increased. Yet we are, for financial reasons, unable to fully and most effectively meet the new demand for our work. The new recognition and attention has not resulted in increased funding. We remain as pressured as we have been in recent weeks.

We know the kind of programs, publications, and activities that are needed to respond to the increased demand that has resulted from this new attention to our work. It is critical that we increase access to the writings that can empower people and reveal an important understanding: that the choices they have in facing their problems need not be either violence or doing nothing. A powerful means exist that can greatly increase their effectiveness and raise their chances of achieving their objectives.

We look forward to sharing many more exciting developments in the coming weeks and months.