

# NONVIOLENCE EXPERIENCES

Modern and Contemporary Period



Working Group on  
**Christian Nonviolence**  
Christianity and Justice Research Center



Centre d'estudis  
**Cristianisme i Justícia**

*"Move Nonviolence"* is an educational commitment to initiate a process of personal transformation before the conflicts we face in our times, creating nonviolent strategies that free up situations that are at an impasse. This tool consists of a series of videos accompanied by the corresponding educational units so that the teaching guides have the material and direction for their work. The dynamics of this document are classified into sections and their topics in accordance with their appearance in the video. In some sections we suggest suitable options for each end-user profile. This proposal is intended for groups who can be accompanied by someone with a capacity for in-depth reflection on each subject.

Acquire all the material

**[www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net)**

Each unit plan incorporates a series of associated material accessible from the project website: [www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net). The material of this specific unit is found in: <https://movenonviolence.net/U8>.



## Let's Learn About It!

### ■ CHILDREN

Use this short film to explain war and its consequences to children:

#### 01 Trois petits points

Brainstorm answers to the following questions: What is the dark monster seeping out of the wounded soldier? Why does this come from within? Are the woman's intentions good? But in the end, does it work for her? Unlike a tear in clothing, why do you think fixing the effects of wars isn't as easy as sewing a few stitches? Threads are no match for scissors. But what kind of forces are there in the world? Only the destructive ones? Non-violence is a constructive, dignifying force that can take on the dark monster of war, and do so without violence. Have them come up with a new ending by applying nonviolent force. Do we know of any examples of non-violence in history? We then adapt to their level a modern or contemporary example which we have already studied.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

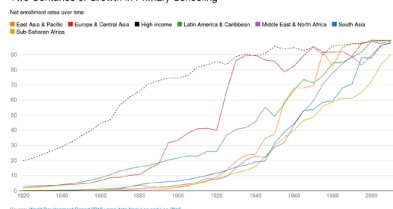
Watch this subtitled video:

#### 02 Nonviolence and Peace Movements

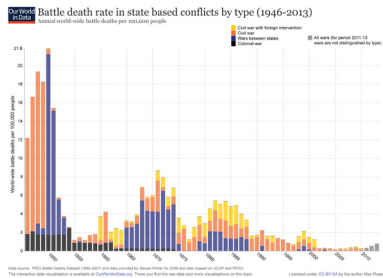
That offers a glimpse of nonviolence over the past twentieth century, and try to carefully interpret the following three graphs:



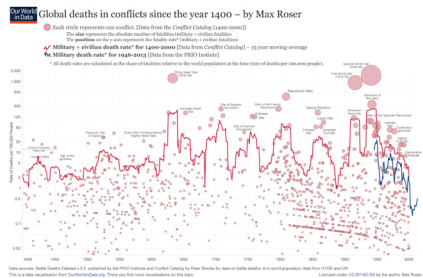
Two Centuries of Growth in Primary Schooling



04



05



Brainstorm the following questions:

- What can we learn from these four resources?
- How are the percentages of education, nonviolence, and death tolls in wars related?
- What is this data telling us if we want to build a fairer and more peaceful world for future generations?

## Zambia: Anti-Colonial, Nonviolent Strategies,<sup>1</sup> 1900-1960



During the British colonization of Zambia, the colonial government maintained domination using taxation of the local population. During the 1930s and 1940s, miners began agitating for decent working conditions. Some Christian churches preached racial equality and civil disobedience, without much success. From 1957 on, and after reducing African representation in the Federal Assembly, the struggle for independence was radicalized with violent and also nonviolent actions (boycotts, non-cooperation with government policies, student strikes...). As a result, repression increased. Anti-European sentiment strengthened Zambia's national parties, such as UNIP, led by Kenneth Kaunda, an advocate of nonviolent struggle who was imprisoned several times for this reason. After the colonial government proposed an elitist constitution in 1961 that favored Europeans, Kaunda, having read Gandhi's writings, implemented a series of nonviolent pressure tactics while demanding that the people never resort to violence. The Cha cha cha was a mass campaign of blood-

less acts (destruction of the country's infrastructure to demonstrate to the British they were ungovernable), but which led to violent riots. There were also nonviolent women leaders, especially Julia Mulenga—known as Mama Chikamoneka—who organized women's groups to march bare-chested to the airport, where they confronted the colonial secretary. The nonviolent nature of the leadership, the international support Kaunda received from pacifist organizations such as the World Peace Brigade, the education in values with which Christian churches empowered the country, and the existence of British parliamentarians in favor of African independence together led to the independence of Zambia in 1964, and thus a great deal of violence was avoided.

### ■ CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Violence is like dirt: Once you touch it, you dirty everything. Ask for six volunteers: One will have clean hands, another will have hands with dust on them, and another will have them covered in wet paint. The other three are celebrating their birthdays today and will have to receive a gift from each of the first. We explain that clean hands belong to those who take action but do not want to touch the dirt of violence, the ones that are dusty belong to those who become violent, but if they are dusted off they are not so dirty, and those with paint have decided to act violently to get what they want. We now show three handmade clay figurines. We ask each of the first three to give their

1. BARTKOWSKI, Maciej J. (2013). *Recovering Nonviolent History. Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 71-88.

figurine to one of the people whose birthday it is. Everyone observes the act and we analyze it: Whoever does not use violence is able to give a good deal. Whoever has sometimes resorted to violence dirties their figurine, which loses value. The person who has carried out violence to get what they want gifts a figurine marked up with paint: They have destroyed it. It is no longer the same nor can it be cleaned without damaging the clay figurine?

## ■ ADULTS

Read the example of Zambia carefully, and, if necessary, expand on the information. We propose a debate with these questions:

- Is the destruction of property and infrastructure violence? We can return to the definition of violence from the beginning of Unit 1. On this point, we differentiate between *violent action*, *bloodless action* and *nonviolent action*.
- Are there cases where bloodless action is more justified and can be part of a non-

violent “lesser evil” intervention? Some hints: Bloodless action (such as damage to infrastructure) could only be acceptable if:

- It is weighed effectively enough as a temporary strategy in response to extreme violence. It is an evil (because it will sacrifice the welfare of many people) that is chosen only as a path to lesser evil.
- It is a stage of pragmatic nonviolence (to weaken tyranny) always aimed at returning to principled nonviolence (which seeks a final peace agreement, not to crush the purveyors of violence).
- Preferably it will damage infrastructure that makes cycles of violence possible (oil pipelines, weapons factories...).

The key to such damage not being considered violence is for it to never target a living thing.

- How should we respond to combinations of violence and nonviolence that easily arise during nonviolently organized actions?



## Liberian women for peace and nonviolence



Liberian pacifist activist Leymah Gbowee<sup>1</sup>—winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011—created the organization Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace to fight using nonviolence to end the war in Liberia. The group,

made up of Muslim and Christian women who sought to achieve peace in their country—at war since 1989—promoted various awareness campaigns as well as political and social pressure campaigns, but the most daring, unique and effective activism was their efforts in relation to sexual abstinence. The women went on a “sex strike” until the men put an end to the civil war. And the truth is that the conflict in Liberia ended a year after this radical campaign began. Local experts and witnesses acknowledged the role this long-term action had on the outcome. Leymah Gbowee aptly noted that the sex strike “is effective because it captures people’s attention,” and “makes men think.”

### ■ CHILDREN

Have children draw a picture with a scene showing how to stop a war without weapons. Then select some drawings and have their creators talk about them publicly. Finally, apply them to the year and continent of the Liberian War, and adapt the case of the women’s movement to their age range discussing how they suffered and continued to pray and change minds, make demands

and remain outraged at the fighting, until in the end they managed to apply enough pressure to stop the war.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

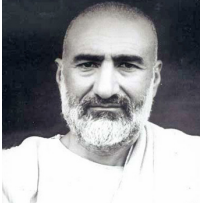
Watch the documentary “Pray the Devil Back to Hell” (2008) suggested in Chapter 9 of Unit 5.

Organize a film forum with these questions:

- What makes Leymah Gbowee an extraordinary woman, rather than just another woman suffering through war?
- List the types of nonviolent tactics that were applied throughout the war (e.g., sit-ins, sex strikes, prayers, letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations...). How do we choose the most appropriate tactic at any given time, and how can we come up with new, creative ways of communicating the same message?
- The hardest moments are where it is easiest to give up the fight. Figure out which moments were most difficult for the women’s movement, and how they overcame them. What can we learn from this?
- What is the role of faith (beliefs of any kind) in sustaining a nonviolent struggle?

1. See Unit 6, Chapter 3

## Abdul Ghaffar Khan



Abdul Ghaffar Khan was born in 1889 in Utmanzai, a war-torn border zone between Afghanistan, China, India and what is now Pakistan. Men were trained for war. Most were Pashtun, an ethnic

group whose language and pre-Islamic code of honor differentiated them from the others. Khan was a social reformer who encouraged the creation of secular schools and promoted social work projects and peasant organizations. He became involved in anti-colonial campaigns in Muslim countries, for which he was imprisoned several times. He also founded the *Pashtun Jirga* movement, which sought to incorporate a corps of Muslim volunteers conceived as a “nonviolent army,” orienting the Pashtuns’ warlike qualities toward non-violence: Committed to society’s well-being and a simple life, they rejected laziness and evil, and ‘abstained altogether from violence.’ They relied on Koranic notions of the unity, transcendence, and omnipotence of God, which reproduced the Gandhian values of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*, and regarded jihad as a struggle between the good and evil in one’s heart. They were important Muslim allies of the Gandhian struggles in India. Gandhi was assassinated on charges of being pro-Muslim, while Pakistan imprisoned Khan on charges of being pro-Hindu. He was finally released and died in 1988 at the age of 95, having influenced the father of future Pakistani President Benazir Bhutto.

### ■ CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ask children, with simple examples, about the importance of a promise. All our intentions and actions are toward that end (perhaps sacrificing one’s own time, some personal things...). Members of *Khudai Khidmatgar*, the group of volunteers that Abdul Ghaffar Khan trained in 1929 in Muslim communities near Peshawar, made promises that would help them with nonviolence: 1) Free participation and honesty; 2) to sacrifice for others; 3) to never encouraging hatred and to work for the oppressed; 4) to live nonviolence; 5) to help everyone without distinction... etc. Comment on these first five items of their decalogue that they promised to obey. Make a decalogue for your group: What do we want to pursue as the end goal of our nonviolent group, in order to transform the world? Finally, make a mural depicting Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his nonviolent community, along with your group’s decalogue.

### ■ ADULTS

Get into groups to research in parallel the education Khan proposed, his nonviolent actions, and the relationship between his Muslim faith and his commitment to his people. To do this you can use these documents.<sup>1</sup> To close, each group should write down and share what they’ve learned of nonviolent teachings.

1. EASWARAN, E. (1999). *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam. Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains*. Tomales: Nilgiri Press. Also these documentaries: [Citizen of the World—Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan](#) (2011), and *The Frontier Gandhi: Badshah Khan, a Torch for Peace* (2008).



The history of nonviolence in West Papua stems from resistance against the Dutch and Japanese colonial powers. During the 1940s, campaigns were already underway to reject forced labor and taxes, or to assert the right to the singing and dancing of national songs. During that period of struggle for independence, however, there were also violent episodes. The music of the Mambesak group strengthened cultural identity and mobilized West Papua during the 1970s and 1980s up until the assassination of one of its members, Arnold Ap. The “Morning Star” flag is a symbol of independence and has been banned for some time.

In 1998, after the fall of Indonesian President Suharto, the *Forum Rekonsiliasi Rakyat Irian (Foreri)* was set up to engage in dialogue with the central government, but talks failed. A parallel government was formed in West Papua, the *Presidium Dewan Papua (PDP)*, as well as civil institutions for nonviolent social mobilization. Although West Papua gained some degree of recognized autonomy, after a crackdown its leader Theys Eluay was assassinated. Since then, the nonviolent movement has been divided and regrouped

into different civil, political and social organizations. The conflict is still active today, and with violent mobilization. Nonviolence, however, has played and continues to play a very important role on the path to West Papua’s independence.

### ■ CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Briefly explain, in an age-appropriate way, the efforts of the natives of West Papua to achieve independence. Spread out, leaving a metre between the children, and in such a way that each person is next to someone with whom they feel united (by tastes, by friendship, by way of acting...). The guide labels pairs that are side by side with the same number (1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3...). Then, each pair writes ‘US’ on a piece of paper in their own color (1’s are yellow, 2’s are blue...). A dice is rolled, and let’s say it comes up 3. The person guiding will ask the 3’s who they’d like to be placed next to. Probably some of them wanted to be next to someone other than their partner (e.g. with a member of the 2’s). Both couples are invited to show the ‘US’ of each color. If we have things in common, why don’t we make a bigger ‘US’? Then they break up the small ‘US’s and the four make a larger one that includes the pieces of the two ‘US’s, like a mosaic. The dice is rolled until the whole group ends up being one big ‘US’ with all the colors. Ask them to sit down and reflect: At first we said that the ‘US’ of Indonesia does not let the ‘US’ of West Papua keep their colors. Is that fair? Is it tolerable, however, to resist this with violence? How can we go about defending an ‘US’ where everyone is



welcomed, without having to abandon one's own colors (language, traditions, ways of life, self-government...)? The other color does not threaten me; it enriches me

## ■ ADULTS

We offer three proposals.

In English

- Watch together the Al Jazeera documentary:

[06 Pride of Warriors](#)

- Or this critical ad that has been banned in Indonesia:

[07 Visit West Papua!](#)

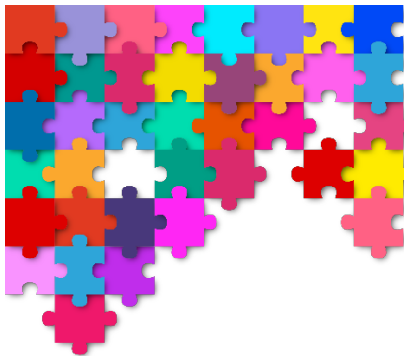
In Spanish

- Read the article that summarizes the political situation in West Papua:

[08 Por qué Papúa lleva 50 años reclamando su independencia de Indonesia](#)

Then debate together: Is it important to defend the rights of minority ethnic groups to exist and to govern themselves? Why? What happens when we stop advocating for minorities' right to exist as they wish?

Together, film a critical ad that uses humor to denounce some ethnic injustice. What power does this nonviolent approach have?



During the English Civil War (1642-1651), a group led by the preacher George Fox and his followers (especially the nucleus called the “Valiant Sixty”) emerged, spreading a declericalized view of Christianity, from the North of England to the whole country, Europe and the colonies, to form the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers.

From the beginning they practiced civil disobedience, and acts of nonviolence and pacifism have permeated the idiosyncrasies of the group to this day. Persecuted and imprisoned, they refused to pay compulsory religious tithes, and led campaigns against them, such as those mobilized by Mary Forster and Anne Whitehead. They also used street nudity as a protest against the established social, political and religious order. An example was that of Elizabeth Fletcher: Around 1655, she went nude down the streets of Oxford denouncing the hypocrisy of the English Parliament—both Presbyterians and Independents. The role of Quaker women, who worked for gender equality within the community and in society, was important. The work of Hester Biddle and her subsequent imprisonment make this struggle visible: She made speeches in the streets even though women were forbidden from doing so. The essay<sup>1</sup> by Margaret Fell—considered the mother of Quakerism—was also noteworthy, as it called for the equality of men and women in the religious ministry as early as 1666.

## ■ CHILDREN

In pairs, challenge them to stay silent for sixty seconds without moving while staring into the other person’s eyes; next, to remain silent for the same amount of time, but facing a wall. How did it feel? Are these two periods of silence different? In its meaning and in what it communicates to us, one period of silence influences much more than being quiet. The Quakers thus discovered the power of silence and the depths of its roots.

## ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

In pairs, we stare silently at each other for four minutes. Repeat two or three times with other couples. How did we feel? What have we discovered? Now introduce the Quakers and their silence in times of worship, the source of nonviolent community power. Silence also humanizes:

### 09 Look Beyond Borders

Or work on the lyrics to the song “The Sound of Silence” (Simon and Garfunkel, 1964), a negative view of silence as a barrier. The goal is to learn different types of silences, and empower each with the ability to change reality through silence.

1. FELL, M., DONAWERTH, J. and LUSH, R. M. (2018). [Women’s speaking justified and other pamphlets](#). Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

# 6

## The Berlin Wall

In November 1989, the city of Berlin was divided by the wall of the same name that split the city in two, as well as the country and the continent. It all started on September 11, 1989, when the Hungarian government announced that it would not place restrictions on East Germans who wanted to cross the border into Austria, a neutral country. This measure demonstrated the weakening of the Soviet bloc and led to an increase of emigrants to the FRG. When they arrived in West Germany, the embassies of the socialist countries began to be occupied as a way of pressuring them, and this provoked a humanitarian crisis, as they could not keep everyone there. Although the GDR withdrew visas to the only country where East Germans could enter without problems, in order to avoid the passage to Hungary and from there to escape to the FRG, the people of East Germany began mobilizing. Firstly, on Mondays in Leipzig protests were organized that grew until the birth of the East German civic movement. Despite the control and repression by the secret police (the Stasi), the mobilizations increased in number and intensity. Initially, they demanded the opening of train stations and of the closed borders within the block, but with the increase in participants throughout October they were calling for economic, political and social changes. In addition to the mass protests, mass emigration abroad put pressure on the country itself and also caused an internal imbalance, so that the situation became increasingly unsustainable. Eventually, the pressure and nonviolent persistence of the crowd tore down a wall that just a few weeks earlier seemed impossible to bring down. And the history of Europe changed forever.

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Find out more about this historic event. Prepare a group play about the fall of the wall in groups to perform it in front of families on the occasion of a party, with classmates, etc. You can take the point of view of a family that is divided, for example. Adapt language and situations to be age-appropriate, and avoid presenting "good or evil," but rather people who carry out orders against peace, and people who want peace. The wall can be made with cardboard boxes. Guards will be identified in some way (caps, painted faces...) but no weapons. You can stage 1) the situation and the wall, 2) emigration, 3) the tensions and protests in Leipzig and 4) the outcome: They break the wall and reunite with relatives.



## Danish resistance to Nazi occupation

During World War II, Denmark was invaded by German troops (April 1940). Initially, the invaders respected the country by forming a unity government led by the monarch Christian X of Denmark. From 1943 onwards, however, German Nazism took full control of the police and army, despite the king's explicit refusal. The Danes organized a "national rescue effort" to protect Jewish fellow citizens through thousands of collaborators, and organized the transfer of the maximum number of Jews to Sweden. Business leaders financed the clandestine rescue effort; many citizens welcomed Jews into their homes, schools, or churches on their journey to the border. King Christian X supported the mobilization. There is even the myth that he himself took to the streets bearing a yellow star meant to identify Jews, and that thus motivated many other people to do the same. The monarch joined the resistance and nonviolence movements by providing information to the resistance, coordinating with foreign groups... The act of continuously shunning all the Nazis became so massive that it made life unbearable for the invaders. With a mixture of sabotage, resistance and clandestine disobedience (such as changing signs, passing on false information or hindering communications, non-cooperation of companies, banks and professionals...), Danish unity was strengthened, and the invaders' withdrawal was hastened. Hannah Arendt observed that in the face of Danish resistance "the violent 'toughness' of the Nazis had melted like butter in the sun."

### ■ CHILDREN

We suggest the group play the game

[10 Disobey the Star](#)

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

With eyes closed, accompany them with a few minutes of relaxation until you contemplate these scenes with your imagination: You are working in an assembly factory (you can describe the atmosphere, the family stability it implies ...). Take a few minutes to appreciate every detail. One day, you see on the news that the owner is using the parts to make weapons that will be used to massacre crowds: the barbarities it represents, the images and the statistics. Go back to work the next day. Give yourself time to consider how they feel. What is the mood? What action do you take? Do you keep working to feed your family at the expense of everyone else? Assess this complex ethical dilemma. Then talk about it and share the answers. In the end, explain the Danish resistance to Nazi occupation with the help of the introduction, bibliography or video you will find at

[11 Denmark in World War 2](#)

Come up with a scale of values in ethically complex situations. Analyze the causes of success or failure in each Danish action, and how they managed to sustain nonviolent cohesion among the masses.

## The lead up to American independence<sup>1</sup>



detriment of nonviolence, a war that lasted eight years. Could independence have been achieved with nonviolence? Gene Sharp, an expert on nonviolent strategy, believes that if the nonviolent strategy of the First Continental Congress had been maintained, independence would have been achieved sooner and with less bloodshed.

The process that led to the independence of the United States was characterized by the violence of war between 1775 and 1783. However, there was an oft forgotten nonviolent decade between 1765 and 1775 which played an important role.

Amid a heavy burden of taxes on the American colonies and restrictions on buying and selling non-British products, the population began to organize demonstrations, theatrical performances and boycotts against products from the metropolis in order to promote American products. One of the most significant boycotts was the Boston Tea Party of 1773: By throwing the East Indian Company's cargo of tea into the sea, they boosted coffee consumption in its place. The colonies began developing state institutions in parallel to those of the colonial power. This was ratified as a strategy at the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1774 in order to coordinate nonviolent anti-colonial actions. But after a military crackdown by British power, fighting broke out and the Second Continental Congress of 1775 decided to coordinate an armed response to the



1. You may read various historical references: BARTKOWSKI, Maciej J. (2013). *Recovering Nonviolent History. Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 299-307. A work dedicated exclusively to this period is: CONSER WH, JR, MCCARTHY, RM, TOSCANO, DJ, I SHARP, G. (eds.). (1986). *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765-1775*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

## ■ CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Pick a fun and competitive game that pits two teams against each other (capture the flag, a relay race...). The winning team is asked to write half a page on how they would describe their victory in history books (a detailed description of the team members, what they did to win...). Meanwhile, from the other side, someone is chosen who is not shy and likes attention: What's more, they are to be asked to make a very loud and long shout at a certain point. Come back together, and the losing team is asked to join together and in five minutes mold a clay figure representing the cooperation of one of the teams. Towards the end, when they have almost finished the figure, a signal is given to the chosen player to shout loudly. Immediately afterwards, the activity of the two groups is broken up and a circle is formed to interpret things: Start by asking the person who shouted why they did so. If they say they acted out of obedience, have them see that not everything that is ordered is good, but that you are thankful for their cooperation in this activity. Then it can be pointed out to everyone that the scream (violence) is what has impacted them and what they remember, while the beautiful mud figure about team cooperation is no longer on their minds. Such is the way with nonviolence (valuable but forgotten, as in the history of US independence) in the face of violence (the war that followed). Lastly, have them read what they have written about history (will it be an exaggerated epic?), and let it demonstrate how unfortunately all too often it has been the victors who have written history, and that is why they have distorted it.

## ■ ADULTS

Take the history curriculum of a given school grade (your children's, a high school's...). Count how many historical episodes covered are violent or destructive, and how many are nonviolent or constructive. To debate: Do you think there really haven't actually been many nonviolent or constructive episodes? You can bring a bibliography that covers the history of nonviolence to push back against this prejudice. With knowledge gained so far, try to write an alternative curriculum on the history you would like your children to study, including the forgotten references to nonviolence and peace, and of activists against injustices. Could you present it as a proposal in an educational setting?

## Chico Mendes: Nonviolence and Ecology



Francisco Alves Mendes Filho, known as Chico Mendes, was a Brazilian rubber tapper from the age of 9, trade unionist and environmentalist. The son of a man who was also a rubber tapper, he didn't learn to read until he was 18 years old. Once reading, he began to become aware of the situation of the tappers in his country, and so he began to organize and mobilize other workers in his industry.

This was in the seventies and eighties, when large landowners, ranchers and companies began buying up land where there were trees that provided work to rubber tappers, or *seringueiros*. These workers organized and Chico Mendes was one of the most prominent leaders of the movement. Beginning as a struggle for the rights of rubber workers, it became a struggle for the protection of the Amazon environment, thus drawing international attention. Inspired by Liberation Theology, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, he created the method of nonviolence called '*empate*'. It consisted of peacefully and firmly positioning a human wall of men, women and children between the chainsaws and

the trees. They thus prevented many tree fellings and take-overs of the territory. Chico Mendes gained international recognition for his defense of the Amazon. Nonetheless, on December 22, 1988, he was shot dead by a family of landowners. His death shocked the world. The Mexican band Maná dedicated the song '*Cuando los ángeles lloran*' (When Angels Cry) to him to commemorate this unjust death. Chico was not the only one: He was the 90th victim to die in Brazil in 1988 for the same reason. This section is a dedication so that Chico Mendes' and many deaths like his in the cause of ecological nonviolence are not forgotten.

### ■ CHILDREN

Explain to the children, in an appropriate way, the life and death of Chico Mendes and his concern for the ecology and peoples of the Amazon. Now listen to the song:

#### [12 «Cuando los ángeles lloran» \(Maná, 1995\)](#)

with the help of a translator. Work together on the lyrics of the song: Why do they call him an 'angel'? Who are the other angels? Why does he say that when angels weep, it will rain? And might we be this angel's rain?

### ■ YOUTH

'*Empate*' is a Portuguese word that can mean 'suspend', 'disturb', as well as 'tie game'. Make two groups: One should smear their hands with fresh paint, and the other should try to prevent them from smearing a wall



with paint (you can first cover it with paper, if you prefer). Whenever someone in the clean group is touched by paint, the person in charge of that group is disqualified. Make various attempts at it in order to learn from mistakes: Perhaps there are few people doing the protecting, or the human-wall technique or *empate* needs improving, or someone loses patience and starts retaliation for being provoked by those who are painted... After washing up, gather around in a circle.

Tell the story of Chico Mendes and his non-violent struggle:

### 13 Chico Mendes. Peaceful, Green Warrior

With this technique he saved more than a million hectares and their communities. Why do you think it's called '*empate*'? What is it based on? (Encourage recognition of equal human dignity in others). What have we learned from the various attempts? Imagine now that instead of paint there were chainsaws and machinery. What should you work on as a group? Search online for more information about conflicts and the names of activists who have used this method or a similar one.

## ■ ADULTS

We propose a screening followed by a discussion of the film *The Burning Season* (John Frankenheimer, 1994), or the documentary *Empate* (Sérgio de Carvalho, 2018). Analyze the nonviolent process Chico Mendes followed.



Dorothy Day (New York, 1897) was an American journalist, a convert to the Catholic faith and strongly committed as a social activist to human rights, justice, and peace. Anarchist in nature and bohemian in style, she lived a hard life but always knew how to advance her tireless activism and her true faith. At first, Dorothy wrote articles on literature and her activism was communist and alternative, always sensitive to social struggles and the defense of human dignity. When she converted to Catholicism, she met Peter Maurin, a French peasant who emigrated to Canada, and together they promoted the movement of the Catholic Worker and the newspaper of the same name, which sought to raise funds for the organization and at the same time speak out against the conditions of the poor and homeless, as well as the social injustice that caused it. The movement had pacifist roots and deep social convictions, with a clear preference for nonviolent direct action, and counted on a dedicated body of volunteers, students and benefactors. One of the central projects were community farms that housed the poor, based on the threefold synthesis of "cult, culture and cultivation." Maurin and Day were convinced that human beings would not find dignity or happiness without this triple synthesis, and proposed a balanced model of society in which men and women would produce what they needed and share it, based on the Christian commandment of love. Day led the movement and ran the newspaper until her death in 1980. She spoke up for the poor and marginalized in many articles, and travelled across the entire territory of

the United States opening shelter farms and raising public awareness of the social values of justice, nonviolence and peace.

### ■ CHILDREN

Summarize the life of Dorothy Day and come up with a nonviolent act of your own: Invite a person that works caring for the poorest and ask how many people in your city or town are suffering from poverty. With language appropriate for children, explain the conditions in which they live. Now ask them to draw up ways to change this situation. Gather up the drawings and take them, together with some of the children, to the person in charge of social services at the local government administration. Explain your desire to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and the ideas in the drawings, and ask for workable solutions that will inspire improvements in their situation.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

Taking Dorothy Day as a role model, interview representatives of different social entities in your city or town who work for the poorest among you. Listen to what they encounter on a daily basis: legal shortcomings and lack of support, what the local or state administration does or does not do, the real situation in which these people live...Prepare a report denouncing this and publish it in the media to provoke debate and awareness of the reality of the most vulnerable. May you be inspired reading the biography of this activist.<sup>1</sup>

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