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A project of

CJ Centre d'estudis
Cristianisme i Justícia

 Working Group on
Christian Nonviolence
Christianity and Justice Research Center

With the suport of

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 **Ajuntament de
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**WVW
ACT** International Institute
for Nonviolent Action

Educational Unit 2

IS IT ABOUT FACTS
OR IDENTITY

SELF-CRITICISM



Working Group on
Christian Nonviolence
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"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

Each unit plan incorporates a series of associated material accessible from the project website: www.movenonviolence.net. The material of this specific unit is found in: <https://movenonviolence.net/U2>.

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Polyhedron: the other's difference enriches me

One of the symptoms of a fundamentalist is that their rickety vision of reality makes it difficult for them to accept diversity: It makes them uncomfortable, and they tend to want to homogenize it without respecting or including it. For this reason, a possible «vaccine» against monolithic thinking is the polyhedron vaccine: if I place a polyhedron in front of me, no matter how much I say I see the whole reality, the truth is that I can't see the hidden faces on its backside. I must move to observe it from a new perspective, or trust in the perception of the reality of another positioned opposite me, completing the view of the polyhedron. This metaphor helps us understand how important humility is in a conflict: To be aware that the other, no matter how far away from me (and perhaps precisely because of that!), will always enrich my perspective of reality.

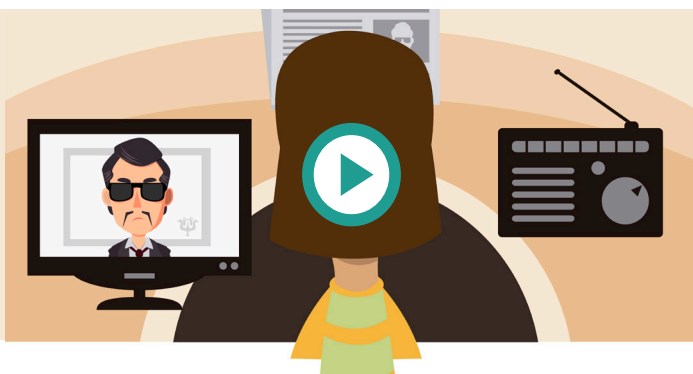
We propose an activity for all ages: A giant ball is wrapped in paper, and large numbers are written all around it, taking up the entire surface (make sure that they have only one reading, e.g. with a base-line under 6 or 9), then fix it on a table in the centre of the room. Divide the group into two and have them line up against the two parallel walls of the room: one side will see only one hemisphere and the

other side the other. Ask them to work as a teams, without moving or touching the ball, to add up all the numbers on the ball as soon as possible. To add excitement, time the exercise at just a few minutes. They'll realize they can't win if the other side doesn't dictate the numbers on the opposite side. In the end, they will be forced to cooperate in order for both groups to win together (if one group cheats by moving or dictating false numbers to the other group, they will be disqualified). In the end the activity is evaluated by exploring the metaphors according to the age of the participants: The ball is the problem or reality that I have in front of me. At first I think my perspective is the only one. But if I add up what I see, I don't get the right result. I have to cooperate with others, ask them what they see, so that I can understand more perspectives of the problem, until I find the solution (the resulting number). Stories can be shared

of having experienced a conflict and of asking other people for help to enrich oneself.

And if the other person is my adversary, who stands right across from me? Do you think that trying to understand their perspective would enrich me and bring me closer to the solution? Debate it.





Re-member dynamic: Have we ever blown up to win an argument?

■ CHILDREN

Showing the drawing, a conversation is started with the group. What do we see in the drawing? What does it want to communicate to us? Do we see ourselves in it? So, do we like being right? Do we become enraged to get our way? Children are guided to an understanding that both sides are right, depending on the perspective. Lived examples are shared. What could we remind ourselves of to not be stubborn about 6 or 9?

■ YOUTH

In pairs, each young person thinks of a conflict he has witnessed, identifying characters: A explodes at B in defence of his or her position. Analyse the attitude and the way in which A has acted, and contrast it with B. What elements have shielded each one and kept them from resolving the conflict? What

should A's attitude have been? Then organize role playing where different sides are played out. The group identifies negative elements and positive alternatives.



■ ADULTS

As with the young people, first a conflict will be developed in pairs. We summon the feelings and the tension. Next, we inject ourselves into it: When has this happened to me, where I've experienced this tension and anger wanting to be right? If there is trust, find common ground as pairs or in a large group. In any case, identify together the elements that do not help in finding the agreement that both seek, and those that should have been strengthened.

1

Hero or dictator?

Leaders have a special charisma for drawing others in one direction. There are many ways to lead: some seem like heroes, putting their all into the service of others; others resemble dictators seeking to put others at their service; and there are other intermediate forms of all kinds. You may also have more positive or more negative leadership in one group or another. To follow a leader does not mean to stop thinking: It is important to figure out where he is taking you! How? The activity we propose can be done alone or in a group: To work out the «OPPOSITE» features of a fundamentalist. This will help us identify it, and reverse it:

After having fleshed out the opposites, we propose analysing some of these videos and identifying in them some of the previous features of fundamentalism:

01 Ultraderechistas en la UE



02 Preventing violent extremism through education



← + FUNDAMENTALIST

- ☐ Irrational fear of the other through demonization
- ☐ Non-inclusive: Excludes and detests collectives
- ☐ Generates fear by projecting fear: Everything is a threat
- ☐ The arguments have more weight because the leader is making them, not because they are reasonable
- ☐ Is personally insecure and therefore responds violently to reason
- ☐ Blocks bad influences that inform: They would threaten their truth
- ☐ Only tolerates developing their discourse through TV, newspapers, friends, books ...
- ☐ They often suspects others, making sure they don't betray them
- ☐ Signs of others' suffering are dismissed as made up
- ☐ Anyone taking a contrary position has been manipulated and is not thinking freely
- ☐ Little sense of humour, only in the form of mockery or cynicism
- ☐ Expresses satisfaction with and willingness to crush or exclude his adversary
- ☐ Differences make him nervous: symbols, norms and homogeneity are needed
- ☐ They don't differentiate actions from people who commit them: They condemn everything
- ☐ His ideology is without compassion, humanity or respect
- ☐ He always treats adults like children by telling them what to do and what to believe

- FUNDAMENTALIST →

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Reversing the fundamentalist mechanism: thinking



Arendt analyzed the banality of evil from Eichman's words at the trial in Jerusalem. To teach thinking, therefore, is the tool for reversing fundamentalist mechanisms that do not think for themselves, but enter into this wheel of mechanistic automatism. Any interiorized behavior or habit can only be broken by making it conscious, and this requires thought.

Guidelines for the film discussion:

We suggest watching Hannah Arendt's film and discussing it. This quote of hers may be helpful:

Thinking accompanies life and is itself the de-materialized quintessence of being alive; and since life is a process; its quintessence can only lie in the actual thinking process and not in any solid results or specific thoughts. A life without thinking is quite possible; it then fails to develop its own essence —it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive. Unthinking men are like sleepwalkers.

Arendt, H. (1978). *The Life of the Mind*.
New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic,
p.191

- **Does «non-thinking» allows you to commit atrocities?**
- **What actions that you regret do you think were made without thinking?**
- **Which sector of the population has the least chance of making a decision with thought? Why?**
- **Do you think that situations of structural poverty justify thinking less?**
- **Consider situations where people who do not have basic needs covered fall into the trap of political or ideological leaders who promise to solve everything in exchange for votes or obedience. How can this mechanism be reversed?**

Solutions that include the adversary

We propose the following case for group work, as a dilemma:

Jack has long been a trusted worker on the farm. He's the only one with the keys to the property. While doing the accounting, Sophia and Michael - the two owners – notice that the numbers don't add up over the last three months. Based on a few signs, they suspect Jack. They themselves have been investigating and, perplexed, they have seen Jack loading crates of eggs into a van at night. Now the owners are considering 4 possible options:

1. To turn Jack into the police with the evidence they've uncovered.
2. Talk directly with Jack, show him the evidence of theft and ask him why he did it. Make him admit it, then fire him.
3. Make a plan for firing Jack. Knowing he has a family that depends on him, we don't want his children to learn that their father is a thief. Without bringing up the evidence, look for reasons to tell him that we are not happy with his work and that we have decided to let him go.
4. Call a meeting of all the farm's workers, discuss a future plan to expand the facilities, and nominate Jack as the person to lead this new stage. Give him greater responsibility to make sure he moves the business forward.

As a group, which option do you choose? On what grounds do you justify it? What consequences might each of the proposed options have? How do you feel as an owner with each of the options? Which option would best integrate the adversary? What problems could this more inclusive option have? Can you think of other possible options that might also integrate him?

In the course of the debate, consider criteria such as: What brings more peace to the owners? What decision will be good for more people? What prior attitudes will owners have to have to propose an inclusive solution? Assess the difficulties of working on a team with someone we know has done these things. How does one keep from falling into naivety or impunity, considering their adversary's qualities? Keep in mind that rebuilding the adversary's image will depend not only on how the others look at him, but also on rebuilding it internally himself. Allow him to forgive himself.

Whoever guides the activity can suggest looking for moments in world history in which this inclusion of the adversary in the solution of political, economic and social situations has been taken as a starting point.

Strategies and tools for self-criticism

When a car is making a noise, the mechanic opens their toolbox and gets to work. When something in my human relationships are making a noise and there is conflict, your own «toolbox» must be opened. Start with self-criticism, asking the question: Might it be that I am seeing a deformed reality? Am I being unfair in some decisions? Could I improve my outlook? The self-criticism



that we will apply is not overly demanding of one's self: It has more to do with disarming false constructs than with forcing one's will.

We propose holding sessions at a library, or with portable materials. The group will have some common characteristic (cultural identity, political, geographic, activities...), and, if not, each member will find their own grounded identity. The idea is to make an effort to resist the tendency to defend identity, and instead explore painful acts committed by one's identity group throughout history. It is a matter of discovering grey areas, and in knowing them to learn skills for condemning the actions of one's identity group that have inflicted pain. May everyone search in history books, newspaper archives, radio or TV programmes, quality websites...but



especially those that run contrary to their own identity, working on finding actions that show clear evidence of pain and injustice. With them:

1. Share out loud «statements» of news or actions that have hurt someone.
2. Assuming that the law of an eye for an eye (Talion) ends up making the whole world blind, we ask ourselves if we would rather push for a different world, one of peace and justice. Within this desire, we allow a few moments of silence: Can I condemn within me what 'my' side has done, without ceasing to defend what I am and what I think?
3. After the silence, the guide proposes the challenge of an inner change: What matters in the conflict will no longer be to ram my idea down my adversary's throat, but to initiate a personal or collective path towards the defence of one's own identity by ensuring that the means employed already embody the objective we pursue - peace and justice - and therefore having the ability to condemn all atrocities and injustices whatever their source. This will honour the cause because it makes it more pure and therefore also more convincing.

Humanize the adversary within me



In 1970, Willy Brandt, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, visited the monument that honours the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto who were ordered exterminated by the Nazis. In an unprecedented and unexpected gesture he showed the world his empathy for the pain his country caused others, with the desire to reconcile with the Poles at the moment when Germany aimed on his official trip to forever recognize their shared border. What attitude does the German Chancellor's leadership show? Research how German, European and international public opinion responded to this attitude and find out what his Cabinet, his party and the German Parliament thought about it.

Based on the situation of the FRG in 1970, research stories from the history of your own country that may parallel to the one we have cited. Historical moments in which those on one side feel and express compassion for those

on the other side, those who they offended, beat or even killed. In your research, focus on a specific action. If it is the case, try to identify the individual responsible for the grievance, so it does get chalked up to a collective. With this understood, seek out data from his personal biography. Does any fact of his life story bring you closer to this person? Can any experience you had as a child help you understand the grievances he committed? Can you find positive qualities in this person?

In order to explore ways to get to know them better and personally, we propose you exercise involving imagining images and scenes, to develop empathy and compassion:

- **What is it like to love their children / mother / family ...?**
- **What violence and injuries have they suffered in their past?**
- **What fears and insecurities must they have? Are they similar fears and insecurities to my own?** Instead of fixing on how implacable they are, I consider their fragility as a person in need. Do I fear this will lead me to justify their actions? Do I understand that understanding their actions does not mean justifying them?
- **How do they feel for someone beloved who we have hurt?**
- **Does anything make me think that they acted in such a visceral way because of the context in which they exist?**

7

Anger and hatred

Throughout the day, actions and thoughts evoke feelings and emotions. Rage is a healthy reaction to a situation of injustice, and is channelable into multiple forms of creative vindication. Hate is a different feeling: an intense aversion, we may choose to feed into it or to constantly underestimate it. It is essential to work out where it comes from: Hatred often ends in violence, and preventing it will involve channeling anger so that it does not become hatred within us, nor is it repressed as resentment. Let's see how to identify what we feel and let's allow ourselves to express it in non-violent ways.

We propose an exercise of imagination (adaptable to different publics, starting with examples suited to each age group). It will help me to close my eyes and visualize the moment in which I experienced or witnessed it.

- (I) I imagine a recent situation in which two people or groups have committed grievances against each other, have offended each other, have treated each other unfairly. Be it directly, in images, or in the account of the facts, I visualize it.
- (II) I imagine a recent situation in which I felt assaulted, insulted, dishonored, hurt, or treated unfairly by someone or a group.
- (III) I imagine a recent situation in which I caused some grievance to another or to a collective. It can be a direct or indirect grievance, and whether or not the other party was aware of it. Examples:

responding badly to someone, ignoring them in a meeting, taking public transport without paying for it, wasting water at home. Consider only a situation where I really felt bad about the way I acted.

- At that moment, and not now, how did I feel? It helps me to remember the impact I might have felt somewhere in my body

Identifying how we feel about the things we do to each other is a first step in managing it. Let's give them names: rage, hatred, indignation, resentment, remorse... They are moral feelings that we can classify according to whether we are passive (I), receptive (II) or active (III) agents of the situations we experience.

Read Iker's testimony and comment on it in the context of hate management:

04 «Ver que el hombre que mató a mi padre...



Watch and comment on how Latifa manages to channel anger into social engagement:

05 Interview with Latifa Ibn Ziaten



Rejecting the indefensible *per se*: opposing all violence

Has it ever happened to you that your group does something that you think is deeply unfair? How did you react? Are you capable of condemning it, even if this means rejection or has consequences? In this activity we will consider 3 levels:

- **ABSOLUTE:** what must be demanded of every human being (justice, dignity).
- **TESTIMONIAL:** that which I will not renounce but will not force (faith, identity).
- **RELATIVE:** that which can be sacrificed without deeply affecting anyone (tastes).

■ CHILDREN

For a group of 20 children, 25 cards are made up with the number 1 in red, 35 cards with the number 2 in green, and 40 cards with the number 3 in black. They are shuffled and left face down on a table. Everyone draws 1 card and chooses a partner. If one of the two children (or both) has a 1, the other raises their finger and keeps quiet (if they say a word they lose and must find another partner). The other children should always be on the lookout for someone lifting their finger and do so as well, regardless of what they were doing. When all raise their finger quietly, the pair who had the 1 surrenders it to the activity guide. If a couple has pair of 2's, they remain and draw a new card. If they have a 2 and a 3, the 2 does not turn it in, but rather keeps it and draws a new card, but the 3 keeps looking for a new partner. If they have two 3's, they play 3 rounds of «rock, paper, scissors»: whoever wins tears up their 3 and draws a new card, but the loser keeps looking for a new partner. The game ends when the guide has retrieved all of the

1's. In the end everyone sits down and the game is evaluated. The 1's stood for conflicts with violence (intolerable!). Whoever suffers it lifts their finger, demands justice from all, and the rest refuse to continue until the violent one (with the 1) surrenders and turns in their 1 (non-cooperation). The 2's stood for conflicts over things I do not demand from others, but ask that be respect in me (beliefs ...). Whoever had a 2 refused to give in to the conflict, because it would be unfair. On the other hand, the 3's were all the other conflicts: The winner is the one who is able to renounce what they want in order to reach an agreement.

■ YOUTH

Same activity as with the children but with variants. Fewer cards of each. They are introduced to the three levels of truth. When a pair is found, they must write a sentence on the back of the card (different each time) a case of reality in conflict for that number (1: bullying, 2: Muslim veil, 3: buying a motorcycle...). At the end, the 1's collected are read, and the 2's that everyone saved. Why is it useful to be free enough to be able to break the 3?

■ ADULTS

The guide prepares a list of conflicting realities (housing, one's culture, painting a building green...) and the group has to classify them: ABSOLUTE, TESTIMONIAL or RELATIVE. Debate: How can we work to gain inner freedom, while being capable even of sacrificing the relative? Violence brings harm to the ABSOLUTE: It is ALWAYS condemnable and indefensible wherever it comes from. How to detect your own violence?

4

Person, identity, facts. Let's learn to differentiate them!



A. Person: every human being. Always save the other for human dignity.

B. Identity: colour that identifies us according to our ideas, life story... I respect that not everyone has mine, even though I don't share the others.

C. Facts: reprehensible or not depending on whether they are destructive or help in the conflict.

CHILDREN

Five children come to the front. A picture of a doll is given to each of them (they are all people). A different coloured pencil is also given to each, and everyone paints their own coloured doll. The dolls are hung over their bellies. Different situations are acted out: (1) Imagine that I only know my colour and the others scare me. I don't want them. So we try to remove other coloured dolls. (2) The other colours are ugly, we want to paint over them with our colour. (3) The other colours are different from mine, but I can outline the silhouette of another's doll with my colour, and they vice versa with mine.

The exercise is evaluated at the end: in (1) fear put us all (dolls) in danger. In (2) we have saved people (dolls) but we are intolerant of

who they are (identity or colour), and we want to impose our substitution. Only in (3) the other colour enriches my doll and vice versa. In (1,2,3) the actions will be good or bad, but they should always save people and respect identities (colours). Only when an identity frightens us will there be violence.

03 The lioness that reunites with its breeder



■ YOUTH

Discuss the following phrases in a group.
The guide will lead reflections:

- «Violence is the fear of the ideals (identity) of others» (Gandhi)
- «What is gained through violence can only be maintained through violence» (Gandhi)
- «They didn't become our enemies because of who we were; they became our enemies because of what we did» (Richard Forer)



■ ADULTS

Analyze Richard Forer's text written after a process of self-criticism regarding his fundamentalist Jewish identity, and after investigating the horrors inflicted on the Palestinians.

After reading the allegations of these respected, mainstream human-rights organizations, my disbelief and shock turned into anger at my Israel brethren for their unjustified and inhumane deeds. My anger then turned inwards as I reflected on my past failure to pay attention to this struggle. My face flushed with heat and a righteous fury seethed within me for the suffering of an entire ethnic group that I had continually ignored. The cries of millions had never even touched me. Waves of remorse passed through my body and I shuddered at the thought that I had rejected their claims of persecution as propaganda and lies. I was ashamed that I had demonized an entire culture and judged its people as irredeemable. In acknowledging my heartlessness, I was obliged to silently confess to my history of delusion and denial.

Many of the positions I had taken on behalf of Israel and against the Palestinian people were factually incorrect. These positions, so prevalent within my culture, had appeared reasonable, even unassailable. They had taken shape during the impressionable years of childhood and were suffused with the common accounts of my parents, rabbis, Sunday-school teachers, relatives and friends. (...) My shame and embarrassment receded, and a heavy sadness enveloped me for the oppressive treatment that so many Palestinians had suffered. (...) Uncertain if my pain might return, I noticed that a distinct sense of freedom had taken its place..

Richard FORER *Breakthrough. Transforming Fear into Compassion*. Albuquerque: Insight Press, pp. 29-31

Turning a clash of identities into a dialogue of people

The popular saying «to lock horns» refers to horned animals that fight by goring until someone is injured or withdraws. Among humans, however, reducing conflicts to this scenario is quite dangerous: Fighting with horns involves creating many victims and often has a disproportionate destructive power. People are smart enough to look for third ways. Bashing one's «identity» into another until it is accepted is as ridiculous as thinking someone would take off their jacket the windier it gets. A clash of entrenched ideas will not be solved no matter how much we insist, like rams clashing horns. Humanizing the relationship by focusing on the people behind the ideas and their real needs will be the first step to understanding, removing protective armor and finally reaching consensus. Dialogue does not imply renouncing one's own identities: By respecting them we can seek to satisfy everyone's needs.

With these dynamics, two role-playing formats for conflicts are proposed:



- Two brothers receive inheritance from their grandfather: 51 cows. One's a furrier and the other's a butcher. They are split with 25 going to each, but there's a conflict over the last cow.
- After a global catastrophe all freshwater is polluted and the last surviving people are far from other water sources. They suffer a huge fire and have only 1 truck of drinking water. While some want to

use it to put the fire out, others demand to drink it to survive

Both groups of people start with the same phrase: «I want the cow» or «I want water». The conflict must evolve spontaneously and they must look for ways to resolve it. If they become too blocked, the guide should mediate by asking the following questions. If they figure it out for themselves, once they're done they can reflect:

- **What is each one's POSITION?**
- **What is the INTEREST we have, that is, what do we want it for?**
- **What is the basic NEED that we must satisfy within ourselves?**
- **We start from the need: Can we insure it in another WAY?**
- **Could we JOIN forces to meet the needs of both parties?**

(In the example of the cow, already at the level of interests they will find that one wants the skin and the other the meat. In the case of water, if the needs are to save properties and survive, they can cooperate to save water to survive and put the fire out with sand, or transport objects together...etc.)

