

## Definitions of Nonviolent Action

### Gene Sharp, 1999

In nonviolent struggle, people have practiced three general types of behavior:

1. Symbolic protests, such as marches, vigils, printing leaflets, and collecting petitions
2. Non-cooperation, such as boycotts, non-payment of taxes, and walkouts
3. Obstruction and intervention, such as sit-down strikes, "underground" activities, seeking imprisonment, and nonviolent invasion.

### Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps:

1. collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist;
2. negotiation;
3. self-purification; and
4. direct action.

We have gone through these steps in Birmingham. ... Nonviolence seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.

### Mohandas K. Gandhi, 1930

I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I should be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer ... would not humiliate him but would uplift him ... Non-cooperation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence ... For me, nonviolence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life.

### Henry David Thoreau, 1849

Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority ... but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. ... If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood.

#### Sources

Gene Sharp, *Developing a Realistic Alternative to War and Violence*, 1999, [www.Aeinstein.org](http://www.Aeinstein.org).  
King, Jr., Martin Luther, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 79-80.  
Ronald Duncan, ed., *Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 1951), 59, 63, 74.  
Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, 1849, [www.cs.indiana.edu/statecraft/civ.dis.html](http://www.cs.indiana.edu/statecraft/civ.dis.html).

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