

PEACEPOWER

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Women in Nonviolence

LET'S GET INSPIRED

Often when discussing nonviolence, we run into skepticism and doubt. People, it seems, are willing to consider the possibility that nonviolence offers a better remedy for the world's ailments, yet remain wary of its true capacity for transformation. People lack evidence of the power of nonviolent practice because society inundates us with glorified violence.

Nonviolence offers hope in outwardly desperate situations, and can restore our faith in the ultimate beauty of being alive and human. We have only to open our eyes every day to find affirmation of nonviolence in practice, even without the explicit recognition on the part of its sometimes unaware practitioners. Humans have lived by the principles of nonviolence for as long as we have been on this Earth. The women that we feature in this magazine can serve as reminders for all of us, and inspire us to incorporate nonviolence into our everyday lives.

In this, our third edition of PeacePower, the theme is "Women in Nonviolence." It is perhaps controversial to dedicate our focus to the contributions of one gender – it might seem arbitrary, or discriminating. But we would like to assure you that this is certainly not the intention behind the theme. Nonviolence combines the best of men and women, masculinity and femininity, and everything in between. But as Chelsea Collonge meaningfully points out in her article "Cultural Disobedience," women,

as a cultural group, have always endured marginalization, and as such, have filled a precarious role with unique potential for the effective and satisfying conflict resolution skills that are so intrinsic to nonviolence.

To illustrate this potential, we have gathered articles and a timeline that highlight some of the most influential and inspirational women in nonviolence. Inside, you will read about Sister Helen Prejean and her active witness against the Death Penalty, and Aung San Syu Kyi's principled leadership of a nonviolent movement for democracy in Burma. You'll meet the women of Budrus, Palestine, and their struggle to save their village's farmland. You'll travel to war-torn El Salvador with Karen Ridd of Peace Brigades International, and learn about the historical role of the Quaker martyr Mary Dyer whose acceptance of personal suffering moved the hearts of so many around her.

In addition to our theme, we've included other timely articles, such as the potential for conflict transformation in Sudan, the upcoming 100th anniversary of Gandhi's Satyagraha, and a discussion of the potential for nonviolent resistance in Iraq. We hope that as you read through the articles in this issue, you will be reminded of the immense power of nonviolence and be moved to find out more about what you can do to practice it. Enjoy!

About Peace Power

What kind of power can persuade the British to leave India as friends, not enemies? What kind of power can move the hearts of white Americans to recognize the need for civil rights for African-Americans? What kind of power can persuade an air force pilot, ordered by a dictator to quell an uprising, to turn away from his target, unable to fire on a crowd of unarmed Filipinos? We call this Peace Power, also known as principled nonviolence. Rather than a negation of violence, peace power is a positive force for change and resistance. By renouncing the use of coercive force, it draws on the persuasive power people have over each other's hearts, or what Kenneth Boulding calls "integrative power." It can also be described as "person power," the dedication of each individual when they convert a negative drive to a positive drive. When those who have achieved this individual dedication come together, they enact "people power." This is the power that can transform our selves, our relationships, our conflicts, and our world.