

# WITH EYES TO SEE



## PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: NONVIOLENCE

*Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him.*

*-Martin Luther King, Jr.*

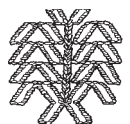
Rosa Parks is a key figure of the civil rights movement, and her actions are well known by most people in this country. The story most often told about her follows that one afternoon, tired after a long day of work, she refused to give up her seat to a white person and move to the back of the bus, thus breaking the law. Her actions sparked the important Montgomery bus boycotts, and to a larger extent much of the momentum of the civil rights movement. Left out of this story, however, is that even before that fateful day Rosa Parks was active in the civil rights movement, serving for many years as the executive secretary of the NAACP in Montgomery. Shortly before the historic ride, she spent time at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee\*, training as a community organizer. Rosa Parks and her civil disobedience were not simply "right place at the right time" moments of history: she was already actively and deliberately engaged with her "internal spirit" as part of a larger civil rights community working for equal rights for African Americans through nonviolence.

*~~~~~*  
*It is isolation that is critical to war. You can't be abusive when you realize your connectedness.*  
*-David Kadlec*

The war in Northern Ireland lasted for many years, with various unsuccessful attempts at cease fires and peaceful resolutions to the conflict. Then, U. S. Senator George Mitchell was appointed as Chairman of Peace Negotiations, and in 1998, peace accords were signed by the major parties involved and overwhelmingly ratified by the people of Northern Ireland. It is said that a major factor in reaching the historic accords was Mitchell's organization of the talks. He brought the parties together in a rural setting, and during meals they sat together and weren't allowed to talk politics. Conversations naturally turned to talk of family, hobbies, hopes, fears, etc., and as the opposing sides began to connect with each other as fellow humans instead of simply as "terrorists" or the "IRA" or "Unionists," the negotiations yielded important breakthroughs.

Both of these stories point to two important factors in the struggle for nonviolent resolution of conflict: 1) It takes a lot of work and dedication of both our physical and mental beings; and 2) When we realize our shared humanity and work past the labels we give each other, feelings of hate and anger, which lead to violence, give way to actions which both respect and affirm the "other." The following pages present activities which focus on nonviolence through these two lenses.

\*The Highlander Folk School was founded by Myles Horton in 1932 and to date has served as an adult education center for community organization and activism. People working with labor, civil rights, and other movements have attended Highlander, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Septima Clark, Eleanor Roosevelt, Pete Seger, and many others.



ideas for  
teachers  
who want  
to  
integrate  
social  
justice  
concepts  
into what  
and how  
they teach

Winter II  
2002

4-12

### Images of War

The purpose of this activity is to get students to examine the images of war they are shown in newspapers and television. Do the images chosen for media affect our opinions of an event?

1. Ask students about the images they remember seeing on September 11, 2001. Many will probably remember the planes hitting the buildings, people running in the street, the fire fighters, or the families looking for loved ones.
2. Ask them about the images they have seen in connection with the war in Afghanistan. Common answers could be U.S. weapons/soldiers, maps of Afghanistan, pictures of Osama Bin Laden, or Afghani soldiers.
3. Now have the students talk about what images they did not see (for example, there were very few images of the people being negatively affected by the war such as refugees, corpses, the injured, destroyed homes/neighborhoods, etc).
4. Using these three lists as a guide, talk about why different pictures are chosen for different events. Ask questions like "Who chooses the images?"; "How do different types of images make you feel?"; "If you were to write a story on recent events, what images would you choose?"; "What images might a child in Afghanistan choose?".

(Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal, Winter 2001/2002, Vol. 16, No. 2. This edition available to read online at [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org), or call 414-964-9646.)

"Nonviolence which is a quality of the heart, cannot come by an appeal to the brain."  
-Mahatma Gandhi

6-12

### Writings on Violence from the Past

While we cannot ask people like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mahatma Gandhi, what they think about recent events in our world, we can read what they have said and written in the past to give us an idea. Both Dr. King and Gandhi had a lot to say about nonviolence, and specifically, towards the end of his life, Dr. King was very outspoken about the war in Vietnam. Find excerpts from the their words, or those of other activists from the past, and discuss their relevance to today's world. One good piece from Dr. King, a speech he gave on U.S. involvement in Vietnam, entitled "When Silence Is Betrayal," can be found at [www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11/16\\_02/sile162.htm](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/sept11/16_02/sile162.htm), or in the current issue of the Rethinking Schools Journal; a piece entitled "The War Prayer" by Mark Twain, in which he pushes us to contemplate the varied consequences of even our most seemingly benign actions, can be found at [www.warprayer.org](http://www.warprayer.org).



### What Color is my Skin?

K-3

Skin color paints can be purchased, and they have names like peach, cinnamon, and mahogany. Gather the class in a circle, and invite each student to the front to try out various colors on the back of their hands, or combinations of colors if necessary. When the child feels her color has been found, have her show everyone in the room. Each child is a different color, and Maria might be chocolate-cinnamon while Henry is peach. Have each child paint a self portrait using their color, and display the faces to show visitors the children of the room. The idea is for each child to feel special, and to break down the generic and loaded racial labels of white, black, brown, yellow, and red.

(from "Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and Early Grades." For information on the free book/video kit, visit [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org), call 334-956-8362, or get a copy on loan from Concern America)



"Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon. . . which cuts without wounding and enables the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals."  
-MLK

K-12

## Honoring Community Heroes

An elementary teacher honors local heroes with her students by bringing in "elders" from the community, all of varied ethnicities, to share their culture. Children are able to ask questions and interact with the guests (a Native American man with drums; a Monk with a blessing for the children; a woman in a wheelchair; etc.). The idea is to help the students be less afraid of differences, to learn about others who are in some ways not like themselves, and to learn about the diversity in their community and beyond. They also learn that their curiosity of differences must be accompanied by respect. When a girl asks the Native man why his singing voice sounds funny (he sang a traditional song), the teacher immediately led a discussion with her kindergartners about how it might feel to be described that way. As a class they came up with more respectful words like "different," or "nice." On another occasion, when the woman with the wheelchair was coming to visit, the class surveyed the school to see where she could enter. The school was not wheelchair accessible, so they all built a ramp for her and painted it as a welcome mat. As a final part of this unit, all of the elders came together to dine with the children during lunch. Presently, an important invitee might be a Muslim. (from "Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and Early Grades," see page 2 for more information)



4-12

## Defining the Terms

We often use words in our everyday language without having clear definitions of what they mean. Recently, words like "Arab," "Muslim," "Islamic Terrorist," "Jihad," "extremists," and many others, are now firmly embedded into our national lexicon. Do we know exactly to whom we are referring when we use these words? Do the people or groups about whom we are referring use the same terms to talk about themselves and the events taking place?

As a class, do a brainstorm of the words the students hear in the news surrounding recent events. In small groups, have each student create their own "Current Events Dictionary" by finding definitions for the words they have listed. In this way, students are better able to interpret the news they hear, as well as learn more about Islam, the Middle East, and people of Arab descent living in this country. Using dictionaries, encyclopedias, the internet, and each other, students might be surprised by what they find (for example, "Muslim" and "Arab" are often used interchangeably, but refer to two different things, and "Jihad" does not mean "holy war"). See page 4 for a list of websites dedicated to Arabs and Islam. (from Rethinking Schools, see page 2 for more information)

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## What is Terrorism?

In President Bush's Sept. 20 speech to Congress and the nation, he used the words terror, terrorism, and terrorist 32 times, but never defined what the words mean. We all use those terms, but we generally do not have specific definitions for them either. The idea of this exercise is to have students define the term "terrorism," and then apply their definitions to various scenarios (that have really happened but in which the country names have been replaced by Country A and Country B, etc, to eliminate prejudice when studying to the stories) to decide if they constitute terrorism or not. This activity will help students take a serious look at the actions of various countries, helping to break down the "We're Good/They're Bad" dualism, as well as expand their definitions to include things like economic terrorism (corporations that do not pay a living wage), among others. Another interesting question would be to ask why we have not defined "terrorism" as a nation. Do we need to?

(from Rethinking Schools, see page 2 for more information--a link on their website provides many scenarios already written up that can be downloaded and used, as well as the article from which this activity was taken).

"The longer we listen to one another - with real attention - the more commonality we will find in all our lives. That is, if we are careful to exchange with one another life stories and not simply opinions."  
-Barbara Deming

"If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies."  
-Moshe Dayan

# RECOMMENDED

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."  
-Longfellow

"Racism isn't born folks, it's taught. I have a two-year-old son. You know what he hates? Naps! End of list."  
-Dennis Leary

## RESOURCES

Most libraries have many materials on cultures and countries around the world, many of which can help with the activities of this edition of *WITH EYES TO SEE*. For additional information, the following websites might be of interest. While all dealing to varying degrees with the culture, religion and politics of the Muslim world and Arabs in general, they are at times diverse in opinion. Check them out.

- **American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC):** [www.adc.org](http://www.adc.org)
- **Arab American Institute (AAI):** [www.aaiusa.org](http://www.aaiusa.org)
- **American Committee on Jerusalem (ACJ):** [www.acj.org](http://www.acj.org)
- **American Muslim Alliance (AMA):** [www.amaweb.org](http://www.amaweb.org)
- **American Muslim Council (AMC):** [www.amconline.org](http://www.amconline.org)
- **Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR):** [www.cair-net.org](http://www.cair-net.org)
- **Islamic Institute:** [www.islamicinstitute.org](http://www.islamicinstitute.org)



## CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Brazil, Guinea and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in Orange County which include:

- \* the St. Nicholas Project
- \* Walk Out of Poverty
- \* Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- \* "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- \* school and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- \* Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Information on any of these projects can be obtained by contacting:

Education Coordinator  
Concern America  
P.O. Box 1790  
Santa Ana, CA 92702  
(714) 953-8575

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## Fair vs. Unfair

Children at a young age have a hard time understanding concepts like justice and injustice, but they do understand fair and unfair. A good way to get very young children to talk about issues of justice is to use books and stories about their lives and what is going on around them, and have them talk about what is fair or unfair. Using these terms, even young children can begin to deconstruct the myriad of layers to our world, and as they grow older, those terms naturally become broader to include concepts like justice and injustice, and empathy. (From the Fall 2001 edition of the Rethinking Schools Journal, Vol. 16, No. 1, see page 2 for more information)

"Who is the Terrorist?" A powerful, thought provoking, interactive cartoon can be found at [www.markfiore.com/animation/fresh.html](http://www.markfiore.com/animation/fresh.html). Once there, you will be asked to choose "the terrorist" from the rapidly changing faces on your screen. For every choice, you are told who you chose, where they are from, and what they do. The conclusion will surprise many people and can be a great spark for a discussion on racial profiling and prejudice.

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