Title of Lesson: Nonviolent Protest Around the World

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Grade Level/Subject Areas: 11th/12th Grade Language Arts; 10th Grade World History

Class Size: Any size suitable for discussion and small group activities

Lesson Duration: Approximately three weeks, including independent student research and presentations

Guiding Questions:

- What are some of the commonalities among nonviolent movements throughout the world?
- How do the goals of a nonviolent protest movement differ from those of a violent movement?

Lesson Abstract:

This is a research-based lesson that exposes students to examples of nonviolent protest throughout the modern world. The ultimate goal of the lesson is to remove the sense that nonviolence is both impractical and anomalous in our contemporary society. Included with the lesson is an example of a digital story based on the American Civil Rights Movement that can provide a model for a student-developed project.

Lesson Content:

The two names most closely associated with nonviolent protest in the Twentieth Century are Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. However, these leaders are but two of the many proponents of nonviolent action throughout the world. Focusing on Gandhi and King alone indirectly suggests to students that nonviolence has had a limited role in societal development, and moreover, effective nonviolent protest can only occur under the leadership of a mahatma (a Great Soul), such as Gandhi, or a cultural idol, such as King. By providing additional examples of nonviolent leadership and protest, we can help to demystify these figures while simultaneously demonstrating that nonviolence—particularly through the examples of effective movements—does have a place in the Twenty-First Century.

In this research-based lesson, students will discover and share information on significant movements throughout the world. Below is a description of nonviolent struggles recommended for student research:

- **Philippines**—In 1986, Corazon Aquino led an effective nonviolent protest movement against the illegal presidency of Ferdinand Marcos. Aquino’s movement attracted a large cross-section of Philippine society that included both rich and poor, male and female. Protesting through a combination of boycotts and non-cooperation, protestors managed to bring the country to a halt, closing schools and factories, withdrawing funds from major banks, and refusing to pay utility bills. As a result, Marcos fled to Hawaii and Aquino became the first female to win a presidency in Asia.

- **Myanmar**—Beginning in 1987, pro-democracy students began nonviolent protests against the military dictatorship in Myanmar, more commonly known as Burma. This resistance movement, under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, has continued to defy the unpopular regime and gained international support in the process. Although protesters have been threatened, beaten, and murdered throughout their campaign, they continue to march and boycott in an effort to gain democratic freedom. Currently the movement is pressuring the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution forcing the military...
regime to enter a national reconciliation program and open Burma to non-governmental organizations and international observers. As a result of her continued devotion to justice and nonviolent resistance, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

- **Czechoslovakia**—In November 1989, riot police beat student demonstrators in Prague sparking the “Velvet Revolution.” Resistance against the communist regime quickly spread from the original student protesters to industrial workers, resulting in a nationwide boycott and massive demonstration in Prague’s Wenceslas Square. The united efforts of Czechoslovakia’s intellectual elites and working class overwhelmed the communist government, precipitating its collapse and the establishment of a noncommunist coalition government.

- **Norway and Denmark**—During their occupation by Nazi forces in World War II, citizens of both Norway and Denmark resisted the implementation of fascist ideology and policies in their countries. For example, two-thirds of Norway’s teachers opposed the Nazi’s educational agenda by refusing to join the mandatory teachers organization and boycotting public schools in favor of private instruction. Similarly, Denmark resisted Nazi policies through boycotts, strikes, and other acts of non-cooperation to prevent the deportation of Danish Jews to German concentration camps. As a result of their efforts, the Danish people were able to save ninety percent of their Jewish population.

- **Palestine**—Between 1997 and 2000, the Palestinian people initiated a peaceful uprising against Israel by burning their identification cards, refusing to pay taxes, and reopening schools forcefully closed by Israel. The success of the uprising, or Intifada, was limited by the eventual outbreak of violence; however, the nonviolent efforts of the Palestinian people successfully raised the awareness and sympathy of people throughout the globe. Today nonviolent protest continues, particularly against the West Bank security barriers that separate many Palestinians from their farmland, schools, workplaces, and medical care. Many of these protests unite activists from around the world, including those of Israeli background, who believe in political, economic, and social justice for Palestinians.

- **Liberia**—In 2003 the women of Liberia, under the banner of the Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET) and the leadership of Leymah Gbowee, organized mass nonviolent protests to force leaders of warring political factions to the negotiation table. Liberia’s civil war, which had claimed hundreds of lives a day over the past fourteen years, was brought to an official close when a carefully organized sit-in placed further pressure on delegates to negotiate in earnest. Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the activist women were crucial in guaranteeing its implementation. As a result of her efforts, Leymah Gbowee was awarded the JFK Profile in Courage award in May 2009.

- **South Africa**—Although the century-long struggle of indigenous Africans against South African apartheid included episodes of violence, nonviolence ultimately prevailed in the early 1990s. Under the direction of various leaders, including Nelson Mandela, black Africans participated in strikes, boycotts of white-owned businesses, rent boycotts, and other acts of non-cooperation, bringing international attention and sanctions against the South African government. Through the efforts and sacrifice of a multitude of activists, South Africa ended apartheid between 1990 and 1993 and elected Nelson Mandela as its first black African president in 1994.

- **Argentina**—In 1977 fourteen mothers, *Las Madres*, began protesting civilian
“disappearances”—including those of their own children—under the rule of the country’s military junta. In a theatrical display, the mothers gathered each Thursday in Plaza de Mayo, the main square of Buenos Aires, wearing white headscarves and publicly displaying their grief. They further raised awareness and inspired action among the Argentinean people by circulating petitions, advertising in newspapers, and leading prayer services and vigils. Throughout the campaign the mothers’ demonstrated extraordinary courage, despite the disappearance of nine of their members. By 1982 their perseverance—along with other economic and political factors—resulted in a nationwide movement ousting the dictator, General Jorge Videla, and establishing a democratically elected civil government.

Although the culminating assignment for this project may take a variety of forms, it is important that students share their discoveries through a digital story, formal presentation, gallery walk, or other means. In addition to increasing students’ awareness of the global nature of nonviolent protest, this creates an opportunity for dialogue that examines commonalities among protests, effective protest strategies, and the nature of nonviolent political transformation. Such a discussion is likely to reveal that ordinary people have combined marches, boycotts, strikes, and noncompliance—in other words, nonviolent action—to weaken the powerful and break the yoke of injustice.

The overwhelming power of nonviolent protest draws its strength from its ability to change the nature of conflict. In violent confrontations, clearly delineated lines are drawn between “us” and “them”; thus, the goal of violence is to subdue—if not decimate—the perceived enemy. In such a system, there is no place for forgiveness or reconciliation. Peace achieved under these circumstances can only take the form that Martin Luther King, Jr. describes as “negative peace”—passivity that masks the destructive tensions that remain within a community long after the battle is over. By contrast, nonviolent action seeks to heal a community broken by injustice. According to Gandhi, through nonviolent action the opponent “must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy” (qtd. in Fischer). As Louis Fischer explains in his book *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*, the opponent is “weaned, not crushed” because nonviolence “assumes a constant beneficent interaction between contestants with a view to their ultimate reconciliation.” In other words, the goal of nonviolent action is not simply to bring an end to injustice; instead, such action seeks to heal, thereby creating a lasting peace in which justice can continue to prevail.

Within our culture violence is considered an effective and acceptable means for solving problems, from playground fights to fights between nations. However, such violence destroys rather than builds a community and its people. Recognizing that nonviolence is an effective tool for resolving conflict used throughout the globe by people of all classes, races, and religions may help students reconsider the role of violence in our modern lives.

**Writing Application 2.4—Historical Investigation Report**

a. Use exposition, narration, description, argumentation, or some combination of rhetorical strategies to support the main proposition.

b. Analyze several historical records of a single event, examining critical relationships between elements of the research topic.

c. Explain the perceived reason or reasons for the similarities and differences in historical
records with information derived from primary and secondary sources to support or enhance the presentation.

### CA History-Social Science Standards—Grade Ten

**10.4 Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines.**

1) Discuss the locations of the colonial rule of such nations as England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal, and the United States.
2) Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.
3) Describe the independence struggles of the colonized regions of the world, including the roles of leaders, such as Sun Yat-sen in China, and the roles of ideology and religion.

### Materials:

- Student access to research materials, including internet resources

### Suggested Teaching Activities (Following the completion of students’ research):

1) Students complete a Digital Story that covers the major elements of their movement using images, text, and sound.
2) Students create a short skit that illustrates a key moment in their movements’ history.
3) In a Socratic Seminar format, students discuss parallels among the movements they studied and examine the aspects that contributed to the outcome of successful movements.

### Bibliography:


