



Newsletter of the Minnesota Center for Nonviolence

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From the Editor

This month, we continue to explore the **meaning of nonviolence** as it relates to the mission of MCNV, using the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the foundation.

In “**Spotlight on community**” we have a wonderfully affirming story that, as all too often, began in tragedy.

We continue our **appeal for community partners** to work with us to help define the MCNV strategic plan. We will be holding **our first webinar** to brainstorm!

MCNV will achieve its mission when committed people share their time and

Not a demonstration.

Not a protest.

Not politics.

People.

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knowledge. We need your ideas! Please let us know your thoughts.

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What is nonviolence (part 4)?

King's statement (right) shows the influence of **M. K. Gandhi** on King: "... the conviction has been growing upon me that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason." (1931, p.341)

Marshall Rosenberg, creator of the Nonviolent Communication paradigm, helps us to further understand the role of innocent suffering in nonviolent change:

"peace requires something far more difficult than revenge or merely turning the other cheek; it requires empathizing with the fears and unmet needs that provide the impetus for people to attack each other. Being aware of these feelings and needs, people lose their desire to attack back because they can see the human ignorance leading to these

"A fourth point that characterizes nonviolent resistance is a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back." - Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story*. Beacon Press, 2010.

"Imagine how different the world would be if, in fact, it were 'reading, writing, arithmetic,

attacks; instead, their goal becomes providing the empathic connection and education that will enable them to transcend their violence and engage in cooperative relationships.” (2005, p. 129)

It is reasonable to assume that most people have a degree of compassion for those who suffer through no wrongdoing of their own. When we observe innocent suffering, opportunities are created for empathy, that is, the ability to feel and share the emotions of the sufferer and to see the world through the eyes of the sufferer. It is then that we are most open to genuine connections with people. **Those who use violence** are able to see the real effects of their behavior and more likely to make other, nonviolent behavior choices. **Those who receive violence** without striking back break the cycle of injury and retribution. **Those who create and maintain the social systems** by which power and resources are administered are more likely to make humane decisions. Are these potentials always realized? Of course not. “The soul...does nothing if you do nothing, but if you light a fire, it chops wood; if you make a boat, it becomes the ocean”. (Bly, p. 50) It is up to us to choose to make a difference.

Bly, Robert. Iron John: A book about men. Da Capo Press, 1990.
Gandhi, Mohandas K. (1931, May 11). Moral equivalent of war. Young India. p. 341.

empathy.”

– Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson



Do you agree that innocent suffering is redemptive and a potential catalyst for nonviolent change? If so, how does that potential play out in your own experience?

King, Martin L., Jr. Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story.
Beacon Press, 2010.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. *Speak peace in a world of conflict: What you say next will change your world.* Puddledancer Press, 2005.

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Spotlight on community

Not Before My Parents (NBMP) is a nonprofit in Chicago, Illinois that empowers youth and improves the lives of those affected by violence. A major part of the organization's efforts is a community Chess Club. I spoke with **Ms. Raydell Lacey**, founder of NBMP, to find out more.

What is the mission of NBMP?

The basic mission of NBMP is to improve the lives of those affected by violence. We do this by keeping kids off streets and away from drugs, gangs and other dangerous and criminal influences.

What was the motivation for starting NBMP?

In 1994, my sweet, kind daughter Elonda D. Lacey was murdered. After years of therapy, grief support groups, the support of my family and friends, and many talks with God, I began to get better. In 2012, I began to reach out to families of victims who were also affected by violence. I offered my support to parents as a mother who understands first-hand the traumatic experience of losing a child. That was the start of NBMP. I attended over 20 funerals, shared my coping skills and told my story wherever I went. I also encouraged parents to attend grief support groups, a great support provided by parents who are just like you and know that even though this is a parent's worst nightmare, you can get through the loss.

Then, in 2016, I was put emotionally right back in that place with the same tears and same exact pain. My grandson Erick L. Lacey Jr. (E. J.) was shot and killed. E. J. was a really good kid with an awesome smile. E. J. had been a big help with promotion of NBMP by selling fundraising T-shirts and hats and by spreading the word to his friends, schoolmates, teachers and people on the streets about how "No Parent Should Have to Bury Their Child" and what NBMP has to offer.

How does the Chess Club contribute to the mission of NBMP?

I soon realized it wasn't just about those who had already been murdered; there is a choice to be made before even getting to that point. It's about all the children still walking around. There is nothing I can do about my children who have already been murdered; what can I do to save a life? What can I do to help other mothers not go through what I have gone through? That's why I started the Chess Club.

Football, basketball, there's bound to be a fight. Chess is all about strategy; you fight with your mind! Chess helps kids learn a strategic method of thinking that helps them react positively in life situations. Every day of your life, whether it's a good move or a bad move, you have to make a move!

We don't teach them chess - we mentor them. Many of the kids come from problematic family backgrounds; others come from great families! We still mentor them. We find out what's going on in the home and do what we can to protect the children. We make sure they have food and clean clothes. We don't make a showy display of this; we do it in a way so that the kids don't have to feel ashamed. We say "I'm gonna buy me a pair of shoes; how about I buy you a pair also?" If their grades are not up to par, they can't sit at the chess table; they'll sit over in the corner doing their homework.

What does the community do to support the Chess Club?

The community donates, both individuals and our partner

organizations. The police are a great help. They bring in kids to play chess. People from the community come to volunteer to feed the kids and help them with homework. We also work with older kids too, like those just coming out of jail. Every second Tuesday of the month, the club meets at the police station. Every Monday the club meets in its regular location. Starting soon, every Tuesday and Wednesday the club will be meeting at the Chicago Park District office. So, we take advantage of every helping hand and cooperation.

What do parents say about Chess Club?

They like it. Their children are doing much better, their attitudes are changing. We specifically work with the kids in a positive way to find out how they are feeling today, then help them improve their attitudes. Parents say they can see the change in their kids. "He comes home, he does his homework". Some parents come to play chess also. We let the kids know we appreciate their positive changes.

What do kids say about the Chess Club and the effect it has had on their lives?

They love it. The other day I was in an interview. I could hardly get through it because the kids kept coming up, giving me a hug and talking to me. "Mom, didn't I do good?" "I'm not mean anymore!" one boy said. I told him "you were never mean, you were just kind of expressive".

Your web site mentions that you will furnish information to other groups who want to start a Chess Club. What would an organization need to be successful at forming a club? How should you approach the community?

There are lots of administrative tasks. You should have a 501(c)3 organization. Of course, you need chess equipment. You need to get your instructors together. It might be OK to have the club at a school, but I think it is much better if it's just kids.

I go and talk to parents. Find out what's going on. "All the above" - grocery store, laundromat, anywhere I am; getting my oil changed...talk to the kids when I see them on the street...Any chance I get to put the word out.

<https://www.notbeforemyparents.com/experience-1.html>

Webinar

Set aside May 8, 2018 (Tuesday) at 6:30 PM Central time for MCNV's **first ever webinar!** (That's "web seminar" for those not familiar with the term.) We will be brainstorming future directions and activities for MCNV. You can participate by phone (a toll-free number will be provided) and/or computer. A computer will be necessary to view the presentation materials. We are working to identify a specific provider for the web services; details will be provided at a later date. RSVPs would be appreciated, but aren't required. Please join us, as your ideas and creativity are very important to MCNV's success.

Event calendar

Community Conversation - date to be determined

We are planning for our fifth Community Conversation. The date is not set but it will be in early 2018. The previous four Conversations were held in South Minneapolis. It is our goal to hold this one in a different location to expand the diversity of ideas. Information will be provided when available; there will be a link on the home



page of the MCNV web site

www.minnesotacenterfornonviolence.org.

Webinar - [April 24, 2018 \(Tuesday\) 6:30](#)

[PM Central](#)

[see article in this newsletter](#)

Community partners needed!

MCNV began as a grass roots group and will continue to grow “from the roots up” where we can add value to the community. MCNV will achieve its mission when committed people share their time and knowledge. We need your ideas!



Help us set the strategic direction for MCNV! All you need is the belief that there is too much violence in our communities and that ordinary people like us have power to reduce the violence. Meet with team either one time only or regularly, approximately 1-2 times a month, depending on your availability and preferences. Face to face and/or by e-mail or telephone as appropriate. Brainstorm ways to help individuals and communities develop the resources and skills needed to live nonviolently.

Our existing projects can use help and we can create new projects as fast as we have the ideas and people to lead them and carry them out.

Whatever you are interested in, the chances are we can come up with a way for you to be involved. The [MCNV website](#) is a good place to start for more information and you can contact me as well.

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